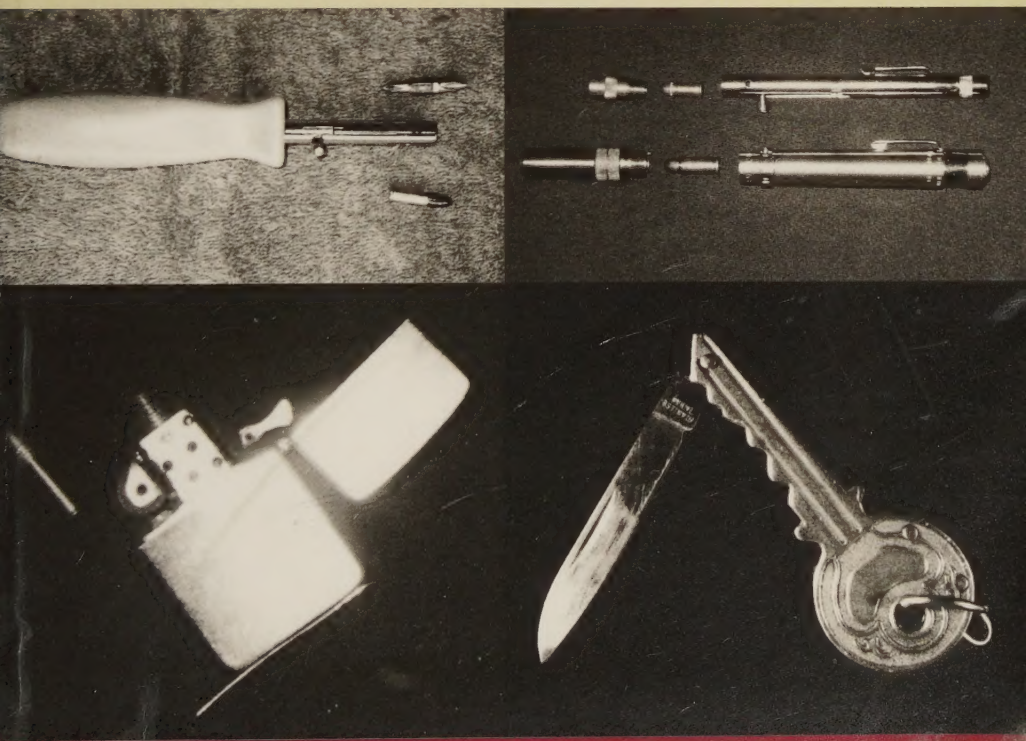
CRAIG S. MEISSNER

DISGUISED WEAPONS

The Law Enforcement Guide to Covert Guns, Knives, and Other Weapons



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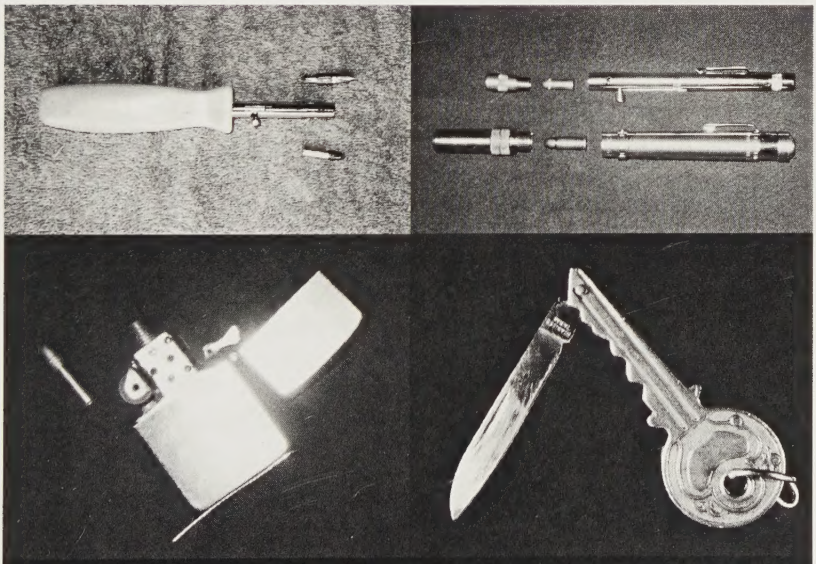

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Disguised Weapons:
The Law Enforcement Guide
to Covert Guns, Knives, and Other Weapons
by Craig S. Meissner

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For Jenn . . .
And for law enforcement agents everywhere
who put their lives on the line everyday.

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INTRODUCTION

Law enforcement and security agents must always expect the unexpected. Whether serving as a patrol officer, an airport security agent, a corrections officer, or any other agent of law enforcement, you should always be cognizant of a suspect's potential for violence. You should also be able to anticipate and recognize deadly devices disguised as common or personal household items, of which there are an extraordinary number. To all but the trained eye, these innocent-looking items appear harmless; however, they can pose a very real threat to you and others.

Lawmakers have enjoyed only minimal success in their attempts to deter crime. Few of today's criminals cease their lawless acts. They simply alter their methods of operation to protect themselves from detection and apprehension. And as long as people commit crimes, they will carry concealed weapons. Likewise with efforts to thwart terrorism. Terrorists, both foreign and domestic, have successfully utilized disguised weapons in order to avoid detection, as the events of September 11, 2001, illustrate all too well. Terrorists and career criminals alike realize that encounters with security and police come with the territory in their chosen fields. For them, searches are a matter of course, and they will utilize any device that may aid in their escape or in the accomplishment of their criminal goals.

To that end, ordinary household items are cleverly built or modified to secret weapons and contraband. Designs are limited only to the user's imagination, and, based on the discoveries of police departments throughout the nation, new ones are being devised at astronomical rates.

This is nothing new, of course. Weapons have been disguised as seemingly harmless items for centuries, and the key to success has always been to replicate those ordinary items most commonly encountered in everyday life. Peasants and farmers in feudal Japan, for example, concealed knives in fans and bamboo flutes. Walking staffs were similarly converted into blowguns and even high-pressure water canons. Used for self-defense, these items provided protection as well as adding an element of surprise.

Later, with the advent of gunpowder, people devised harmless-looking items that concealed more deadly armaments. For example, noblemen in Spain equipped themselves with tiny firearms that were disguised as large castle keys. And cane guns have been carried throughout Europe since as early as 1814, when flintlock pistols were hidden inside canes' handles. The Frankenau Pocketbook Gun is another early example. Manufactured in 5mm, this cleverly modified weapon housed inside a leather case to resemble a wallet. was likely a precursor to the practice of carrying a firearm inside a wallet holster. This is the safest way to protect oneself against the possibility of being accosted by a robber, as the robber naturally assumes his victim is merely reaching for his wallet. Interestingly, two inventors even patented a Plow Gun in 1862. The gun barrel-mounted plow was offered as a means of self-defense for farmers working in the field.

Smaller and more personal items began to see use early in the 20th century. In 1913, Leonard Woods patented a tiny pistol that was built into the design of a pocket watch, and Adalbert Szalardi is credited with inventing the Camera Gun, first produced in 1925. The Chicago Palm Pistol and Huntsman folding knife pistol are two other classic examples from the early 20th century.

However, at no time in history was there greater dedication to the development of disguised weaponry than during Word War II and the following Cold War era, when various inventors were employed by the research and development teams of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS). The predecessor of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), this Allied agency developed all

manner of innocuous looking weapons, supplying them to field operatives, agents, and spies as standard equipment. The intrigue and aura surrounding these items have spawned a specialized following among collectors. And not surprisingly, many of the items recovered by law enforcement personnel today mimic these older designs.

Since the 1950s, the marketing of concealed and disguised weapons has exploded, and copycat designs have sprung up in all shapes and sizes. From the fifties to the seventies, many private companies manufactured these weapons, which began appearing in commercial catalogs. Today, there are scores of mail-order firms that are ready, willing, and able to sell these items to anyone. Advertised for self-defense, disguised weapons in every conceivable shape and size are shipped directly to the buyer's residence with few or no restrictions on their purchase.

In addition, in the mid-1970s the Freedom of Information Act brought about the release of numerous manuals dealing with concealed weaponry from the Cold War era and detailing plans for making such weapons. Replicas are now being manufactured in home workshops across the country to be used by their makers or sold on the black market.

Lastly, many novelty shops now offer various types of disguised weapons, which are increasingly turning up on American street corners with deadly results. A review of recent arrests and violent incidents across our nation and around the world provides ample evidence of this.

For example, deadly cellular phones were recovered at airports and courthouses in the Chicago area as recently as 2001, and in numerous other cities both here and abroad since. Some models of this commonly carried item incorporate razors, while others contain tiny firearms. The recovery of one such weapon involved an attempt by the relative of a convict to smuggle handcuff keys in the cell phone's hollow crevices. Customs agents on the Mexican border have encountered a wide variety of disguised weapons, one of the more popular being a crucifix that houses a knife blade. This

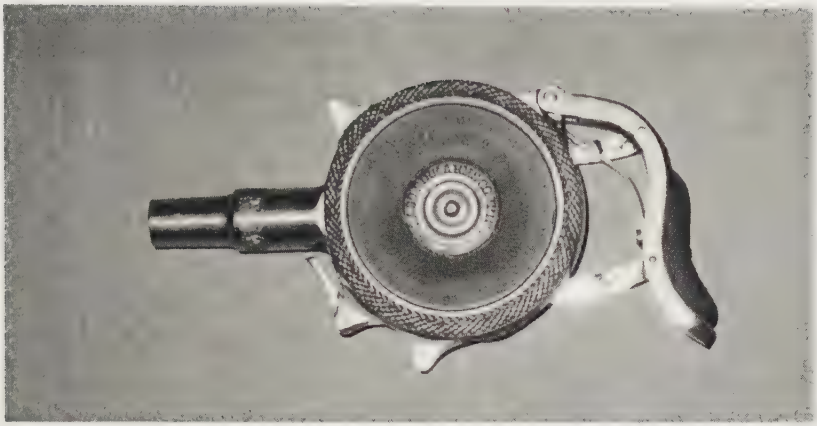
particular weapon and others like it have been used to assault border patrol agents. In Amsterdam, New York, a 16-year-old boy threatened a 15-year-old girl with weapons he had easily smuggled into school, including a key knife no larger than an ordinary house key and a cigarette lighter handgun. In New York City, pen guns, comb knives, and lipstick knives have all been used on the streets and recovered by patrol officers. As it has become aware of them, the New York City Police Department (NYPD) has issued special memorandums about certain disguised weapons, such as calculator knives and secret compartment watches. But no one knows with any degree of certainty how many other types of devices are available on the streets today.

This problem is not limited to the United States. Authorities all around the world have reported confiscating devious devices capable of inflicting great harm that were disguised as ordinary items. One tiny firearm recovered in Greece resembled an automobile alarm button, similar to those commonly carried on key chains. Recoveries of this weapon were prolific during 1998, prompting an article about its existence in *Newsweek* (May 18, 1998).

The proliferation of disguised weapons has resulted in thousands of injuries and deaths, and the hazards they pose to police officers are unprecedented.

For a perpetrator, carrying a disguised weapon serves multiple purposes: it hinders prosecution by making the recovery of crucial evidence more difficult, it facilitates the retention of a readily available weapon—one that can be used against an officer even after apprehension, and it can even aid in a prisoner's escape.

This book is intended for use as a field guide to the numerous hidden dangers police and security officers face today. It is intended for, but not limited to, police officers, corrections officers, customs agents, airport security personnel, and military security personnel. Private security personnel can also benefit from this material and are strongly encouraged to use it as a reference. Although not conclusive, the information herein will provide the reader with fundamental knowledge about the intriguing but deadly phenomenon of disguised



An early example of a disguised weapon called the Chicago Palm Pistol (also known as the Chicago Squeezer).

and concealable weaponry and highlight the ease with which today's criminals can construct or obtain these items. Such information is both useful and necessary.

As an experienced patrol cop once told me when I began my police career, a curious cop is a good cop. Close examination of seemingly harmless items may appear unorthodox, but may just save your life.

NOTE: Some of the photographs in this book are slightly out of focus. These photos were taken as part of actual police evidentiary proceedings and therefore could not be recreated.

SECTION I:
FIREARMS

BICYCLE PUMP GUN

This seemingly harmless looking bicycle accessory does more than just pump air. It is actually a lethal modified firearm capable of firing powerful bullets of various calibers.

First encountered during World War II in countries such as Norway and France, these single-shot firearms are still commonly recovered by police throughout the United States and abroad (especially Northern Ireland).

Frequently built by European resistance groups and issued to partisans responsible for harassing the Germans during the war, these clever weapons are equally as effective today. The popularity and wide use of bicycles by juveniles and adults alike make bicycle pump guns desirable, as they are unlikely to arouse suspicion. Usually homemade, they are relatively easy to produce, as well as being inexpensive.

A homemade 20-gauge shotgun disguised as a bicycle pump was recovered in Boston, and similar items were also recovered in Los Angeles, Atlanta, and New York. The calibers used vary, mostly dependent on what materials are on hand. Popular variations seem to include 12-gauge, 20-gauge, 9mm, and .38 caliber.

Measuring approximately 20 inches long overall, the bicycle pump gun usually consists of two sections that screw together and a sturdy handle. The concept is simple. The round is fitted into one end of one section and then carefully screwed into the other section. That section, usually broader in diameter, contains a cap on the end that will accept the handle rod. This rod is then rammed forward (thus acting like a striker), causing the weapon to fire.

.38-caliber bicycle pump gun (fully assembled).

.38-caliber bicycle pump gun (disassembled).

Configurations may change slightly, but the majority of bicycle pump guns confiscated are of the type described.

A favorite trick employed by bearers of this weapon is to paint the entire unit the same color as the bicycle it is strapped to. This adds to the disguise by giving the appearance that the pump is a matching accessory for the bike provided by the manufacturer.

Police officers patrolling urban areas are especially susceptible to the dangers imposed by this device due to the sheer number of bicycle riders. But, as experience has shown us, anything can happen to anyone at any time. Therefore, all members of law enforcement must remain alert for this destructive disguised weapon.

BEEPER GUN

Within the last decade of the 20th century, a number of new products were introduced that changed the way we communicated with one another. Today personal telephone pagers, or beepers, are so popular that people of all ages, from all walks of life seem to carry them. Even young school children carry them. Inevitably, beepers have been converted into weapons.

Perhaps the deadliest and most exotic of all the beeper weapons, the beeper gun is capable of firing a .22-caliber bullet an effective maximum range of 20 feet. A favorite among drug dealers, this weapon has the same specifications as a conventional beeper. Professional models are manufactured using real casings

.22-caliber firearm disguised as a beeper.

from popular brands of beepers, while homemade versions are built from gutted models. The trigger, a small discreetly positioned button, releases the spring-loaded firing pin, when depressed.

When worn on the belt in the vertical position, the beeper gun appears harmless. Inspection of the bottom of the beeper, however, reveals the muzzle end of a barrel through an opening where batteries are normally inserted.

The unsuspecting officer who is not on the lookout for this hidden threat could easily mistake a beeper gun for the real thing and give it back to its owner—with deadly repercussions.

BOLT GUN

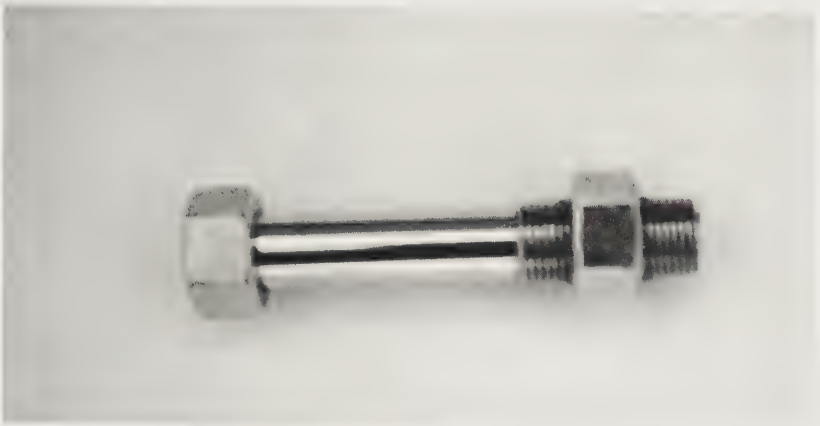
Listed as a "machine bolt gun" in a Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) advisory, this ingenious disguised weapon, first recovered from an outlaw motorcycle gang member in the 1970s, has been widely emulated ever since.

What appears to be an ordinary carriage bolt complete with matching nuts is actually a very deadly firearm. Featured in the *Disguised Weapon Handbook* put out by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (BATF), these weapons are professionally machined to the exact configuration of original bolts, measuring 5 inches long overall and 5/8 inch in diameter. They are available in a wide assortment of calibers; in fact, a sample examined for this book was actually chambered for .410 gauge. However, the .22-caliber model is the most prevalent.

The bolt gun is unscrewed for loading and then threaded back together for firing. To discharge the weapon, the spring-loaded bolt head is pulled to the rear and then released sharply. This drives the firing pin into the primer of the cartridge and fires the round. This easily concealed disguised firearm is lethal at short ranges, with a maximum effective range of 15 to 20 feet.

Easily overlooked by an inspecting officer, the carriage bolt gun can be concealed even further when fitted into existing machinery. As a case in point, the gangster from whom the first such weapon was confiscated threaded the deadly instrument into the frame of his motorcycle.

Once the "bolt" was covered with a fine film of oil and dirt, the disguise was complete.



.410-gauge bolt gun (assembled and ready to fire).

.410-gauge bolt gun (unthreaded for loading).

This weapon is an excellent example of the ingenuity employed by today's career criminals and the ease with which they carry it out.

CANE GUN

Capitalizing on the popularity of walking canes, cane guns have been constructed, purchased, and used throughout the United States and abroad for many years, and they hold a unique place in history.

Firearms have been disguised as canes since the early 1800s, when flintlock pistols were hidden inside the handles of walking sticks. With the advent of percussion-fired technology approximately 20 years later a new design was developed. Although companies in England, and even the famed American gun company E. Remington and Sons, continued to construct canes with cap and ball revolvers hidden in their handles, in 1858, for the first time, the canes themselves were designed to be firing weapons. Cane shafts became barrels. Handles, rather than merely being used as holsters for existing pistols, housed firing mechanisms with small, inconspicuous looking triggers. The handle was unscrewed and loaded with a round and propellant, and the cane was put back together and fired as a complete unit.

Modern cane guns are still built in both pistol and rifle modes. The pistol models all contain internal designs and, when detached from the cane's walking staff, are fired as is.

Another version, simple in design yet potentially deadly, is the cane shotgun. This firearm, unlike the cane handle gun, has no visible cocking handle, knob, or trigger. Built much like a homemade "slap-fire" shotgun, this weapon consists of two steel pipes, or tubes, one of which fits inside the other. The 18-inch section serves as the barrel, its diameter only wide enough to accept a

.38-caliber cane gun.

.38-caliber cane gun (unloaded).

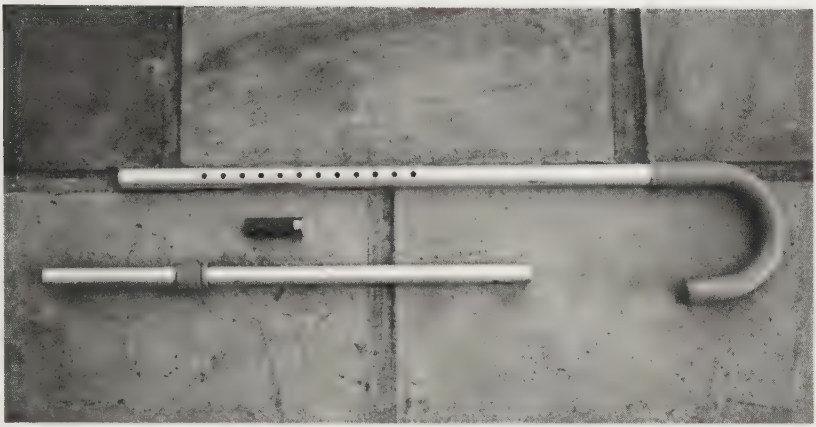
shotgun shell of the desired size (usually 20 or 12 gauge). The shotgun shell is held in place by the rim of the shell. The 12-inch section of pipe is slightly wider, allowing the barrel to fit inside it with enough room to move back and forth freely. This section serves as the receiver. A welded cap on the end of the receiver contains the firing pin (homemade versions have used screws and

Close-up of cane gun's handle (note cocking handle).

"Slap-fire" cane shotgun (closed).

nails as the firing pin). To make the disguise complete, a cane handle is fitted over the entire end portion.

To fire the cane shotgun, the "barrel" section is inserted into the receiver section and then slammed back forcefully. This action brings the shell's primer into contact with the gun's firing pin and causes detonation of the round.



"Slap-fire" cane shotgun (open).

Although only accurate up to 20 feet, the cane shotgun's lethal effectiveness can be far greater depending on the type of round used and spread patterns.

Most cane guns are extremely difficult to identify. These items could easily be smuggled inside a courtroom or police station, or even onto a plane, posing a very real and a very deadly threat.

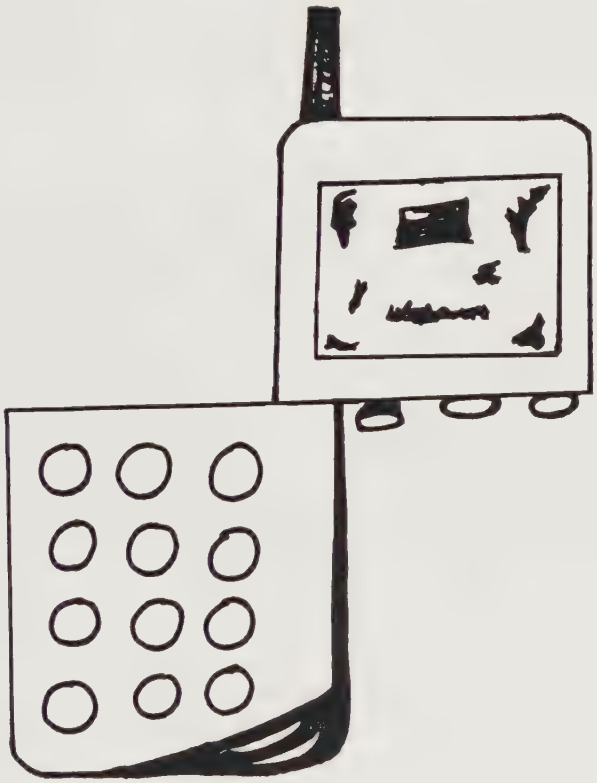
CELL PHONE GUN

First discovered by Dutch police during a drug raid in Amsterdam, the newly developed cell phone gun is indistinguishable from a genuine cell phone. Since the first one was confiscated in the Netherlands, these expertly machined miniature firearms have turned up everywhere from Croatia to London (where gun laws are extremely stringent), prompting Interpol to send out warnings to police agencies around the world. Police believe that at least some shipments of the cell phone guns found in Europe originated in Yugoslavia. Although authorities abroad are awestruck by the ingenuity of this disguised weapon, it should come as no surprise given the popularity of the modern cell phone.

To load the cell phone gun, the phone is twisted in half, and four standard .22-caliber rounds are fitted into the upper half under a screen. The lower half, containing what appears to be a standard keypad, holds the firing pins. Pressing the numbers 5, 6, 7, and 8 in quick succession on the keypad of this ingeniously designed decoy causes bullets to be fired through the antenna at the intended target. Easily capable of producing lethal wounds, the gun will fire four rounds in rapid succession. Another, less common model that also fires bullets through its antenna fires upon pressing the star button and then pressing the number 2 twice (i.e., *22).

Extremely dangerous, cell phone guns make perfect disguised weapons. Small, compact, powerful, capable of firing numerous times, and, most importantly, disguised as an item so common that it will arouse little or no suspicion, these covert guns can easily be overlooked by authorities and smuggled into restricted areas. How

many of these devices have eluded authorities in the past is anyone's guess, but one thing is certain: the high state of alert on which law enforcement personnel worldwide have been placed since September 11, 2001, mandates that they be cognizant of this weapon's existence and scrutinize any item that resembles a cell phone. Airport security agents, in particular, should examine portable cell phones closely, both inspecting them physically and passing them through an X-ray machine.



Rapid-fire cell phone gun.

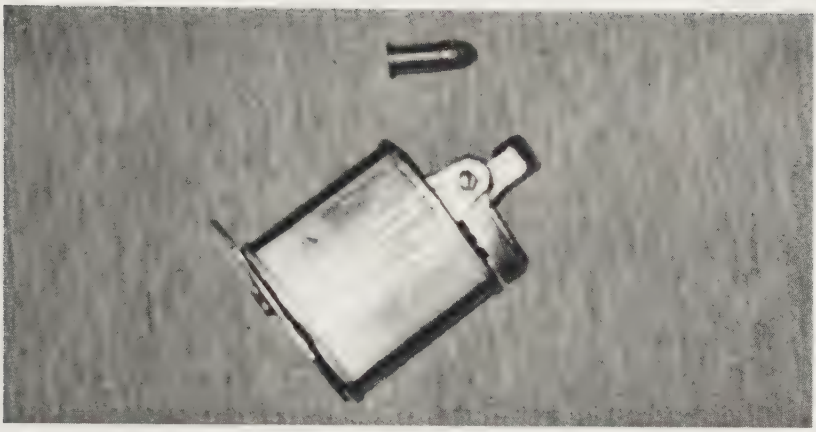
CIGARETTE LIGHTER GUN

Cigarette lighters have been used to disguise dangerous weapons for almost 60 years. Although sometimes used to conceal cutting instruments, such as knives or spring-loaded spikes, the cigarette lighter is more commonly used to conceal mechanisms capable of firing a bullet.

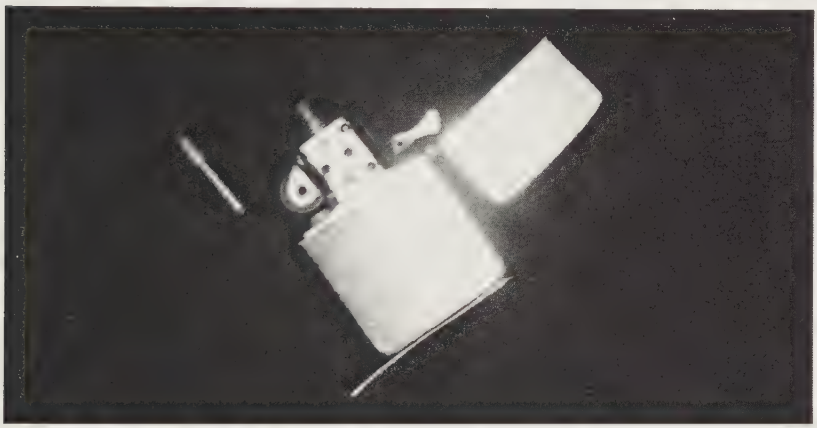
Cigarette lighter guns were commonly issued to spies and secret agents during Word War II and the Cold War era. The North Vietnamese even constructed these devious devices for use on assassination missions during the Vietnam conflict. Today, cigarette lighter guns are among the most popular homemade disguised firearms and have been used and recovered in the District of Columbia, Pennsylvania, and New York, among others. The reasons for this are simple: First, cigarette lighters are as prevalent as pens, hair combs, and beepers; thus, the sight of one arouses little suspicion. Secondly, unlike other disguised weapons, plans for making a cigarette lighter gun are widely available in published manuals and on the Internet (See diagram, p. 24).

To make this weapon, the lighter's wick holder is replaced with a hollow steel tube (usually water pipe) of the desired diameter to form a barrel. A simple triggering device is then added to the bottom, or base, of the lighter. The lighter's appearance may be enhanced by adding engraved initials or other chosen designs. With the cover closed, this potentially lethal weapon, with an effective range of 20 feet or more, looks no different than an ordinary $10 Zippo cigarette lighter.

Another odd-looking device that has been passed off as an old

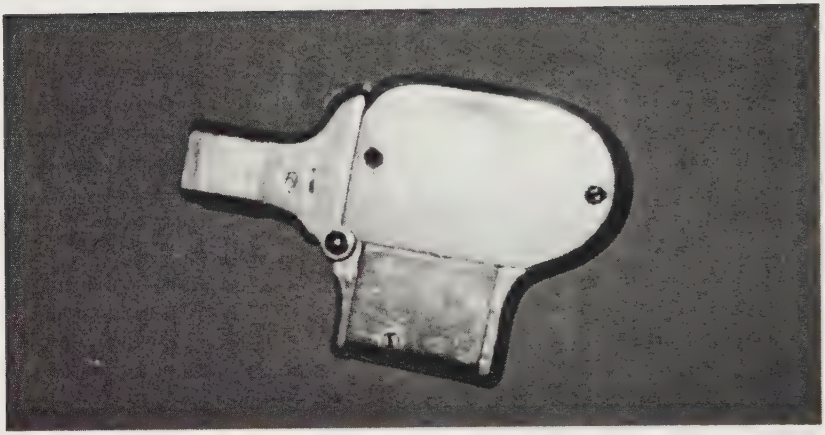


Old-style cigarette lighter chambered for .22 short.



Typical .22-caliber cigarette lighter gun.

cigarette lighter on more than one occasion is, in fact, the Shattuck palm pistol. Patented in 1906, this four-shot, smooth-bored .22-caliber pistol was quite revolutionary for its time. It is held in the palm of the hand with the barrels protruding between the fingers and is self-cocking. When carried on one's person inside a small cigarette lighter pouch, it is even more difficult to identify as a weapon.



Often mistaken for a cigarette lighter, this is actually a Shattuck palm pistol in .22 caliber.

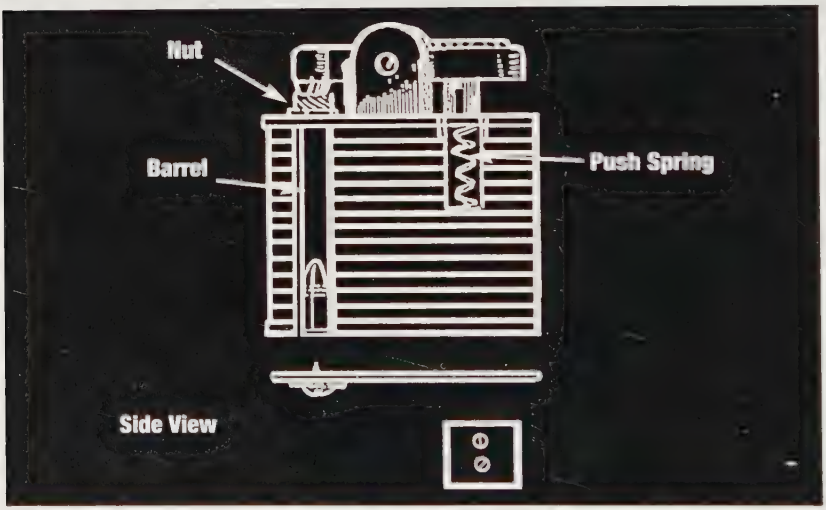


Diagram showing construction of a homemade cigarette lighter gun.

CIGARETTE PACK PISTOL

A disguised weapon that owes its existence to Russian technology, the cigarette pack pistol is a modern version of the Cold War-era device issued within the ranks of the KGB. An ideal assassination weapon when employed at point-blank range, this device was designed for optimal killing efficiency, enabling an agent to shoot a victim directly in the head under the premise of offering him or her a cigarette.

While original Russian-made cigarette pack guns contained as many as four barrels and even included a model that fired poisonous cyanide bullets, the modern cigarette pack pistol is chambered for .22 caliber and usually has two barrels. This devious device is the same size as a standard pack of cigarettes and is available in various brands.

Although considerably heavier than an actual pack of cigarettes, the cigarette pack pistol is indistinguishable from the real thing in almost every other detail and comes complete with fake cigarettes that are removed prior to firing.

To load the weapon, the entire internal casing is removed from the cigarette box. Each barrel is then unscrewed and loaded with a live .22-caliber bullet. After carefully reassembling the weapon, the user can then fire the gun's barrels, either separately or simultaneously, by depressing a small trigger located halfway down the box.

Easily capable of causing death, these cigarette pack pistols pose a serious threat to law enforcement agents, especially since cigarettes are so common. This is also true among prisoners. Because of this, some correctional departments do not allow pris-

.22-caliber cigarette pack pistol (note fake cigarettes).

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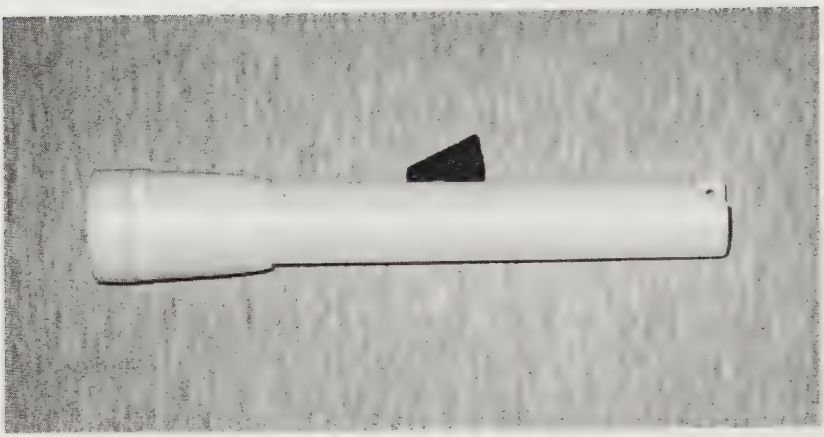
oners to smoke in their holding cell areas and require officers to remove all tobacco products. Regardless of whether it's standard operational procedure or not, all officers should confiscate cigarette packs from prisoners and thoroughly examine their contents before discarding them or giving them back. Similarly, airport security and other security personnel that are required to search individuals as they enter sensitive areas should physically inspect the contents of all cigarette packets. This simple step, although tedious, may well prevent a tragedy.

FLASHLIGHT GUN

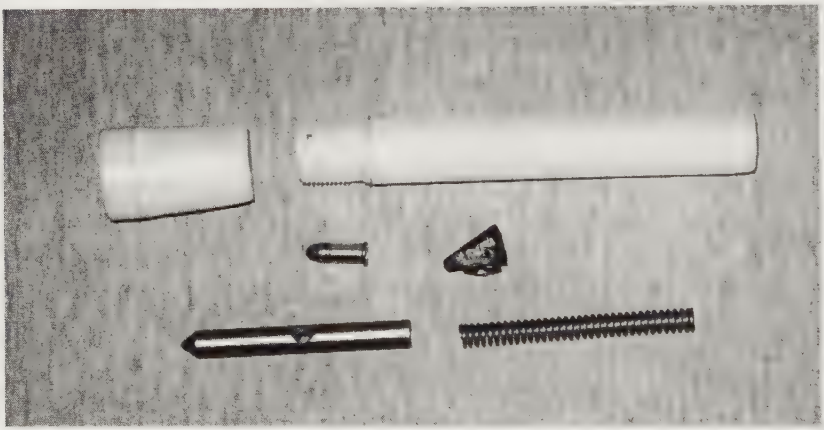
A cleverly disguised weapon that is extremely deadly at close range, the flashlight gun is a classic example of how innocent-looking everyday items can be turned into powerful weapons. Flashlights have proven their usefulness around the house and workplace for more than 80 years. Nearly everyone owns at least one, and many people carry one wherever they go, as miniature models can easily be attached to key chains or toted in pouches and sheaths around the waist.

Modern flashlight guns are available in two types. The conventional type is very similar to early flashlight guns from the 1920s and is almost exclusively black. Measuring between 10 and 12 inches in length, this innocuous looking but fully functional firearm is available as a two-C-cell- or two-D-cell-battery flashlight and can weigh as much as a couple of pounds. The front portion unscrews for loading. Calibers vary, with .22-, .25-, and .38-caliber models being the most common. The flashlight's casing holds the internal firing mechanisms as well as batteries to power the light's bulbs. A sliding button operates the firearm, and aiming is a cinch: the beam of light marks the bullet's course of travel (much like a laser scope).

The second type of flashlight gun is the mini-maglite version. The front portion unscrews to accept a .22-caliber bullet. The 4-inch flashlight casing holds a spring-loaded firing mechanism very similar to that of a pen gun (see p. 36). The special button, or knob, is pulled to the rear and released, which causes the weapon to fire. Because of their size, some mini-flashlight guns do not contain working bulbs or batteries.



.22-caliber mini-flashlight gun.



Mini-flashlight gun (disassembled).

A flashlight gun might be found on one's person, inside a toolbox, in a glove compartment, or on a nightstand. Because a flashlight is rarely thought of as a weapon, this device could easily be pointed at someone without eliciting a negative response—until it is too late.

KEY PISTOL

Modeled after the large, oversized iron keys commonly referred to as skeleton keys, the key pistol is usually brass or black in color. Once sought after by collectors of curios and relics, this classic disguised weapon is now available in new configurations that are just as deadly. There are two distinct types of key pistol.

The first is a black-powder-only firearm reminiscent of the first key pistols manufactured centuries ago. This expertly made firearm is quite capable of producing death, yet it can be bought, sold, and possessed without any special license. Measuring 5 inches long overall, the heat-treated metal key is solidly made, with no moving parts to break, and looks exactly like a large

Black powder key pistol (note fouling near barrel from powder).

skeleton key, or jailer's key. A charge of powder is inserted into this muzzle-loaded firearm along with a lead ball, usually .26 or .31 caliber. Once this load is packed down, the pistol is ready for firing. This is achieved by bringing a lit match or punk to the pistol's touchhole, located near the handle of the key.

The other type of key pistol fires conventional ammunition in the form of metallic cartridges and, unlike its black-powder counterpart, is considered a modified firearm that is illegal to possess without BATF approval. Although some models incorporate a trigger and cocking device, the most common key pistols appear to be spring loaded. This version, which also measures approximately 5 inches long overall, is loaded by unscrewing the 4-inch-long barrel, inserting a .22- or .25-caliber round, and then threading the barrel back together. When a knob located at the handle of the key is pulled to the rear and quickly released, the spring-loaded firing pin drives forward, striking the primer of the bullet and discharging a round.

In either configuration, the key pistol has a relatively short effective maximum range of only 12 to 15 feet but is nevertheless extremely deadly.

Recoveries of these weapons have been so common in municipalities throughout the United States that a brass key pistol is highlighted in the BATF's *Disguised Weapons Handbook*. Although skeleton keys are not commonly carried or used today, the sight of one of these keys is unlikely to cause fear, as it is an item that is generally regarded as harmless. Law enforcement officers and agents must realize that this perception will only increase the weapon's potential effectiveness and always remain alert for such dangerous instruments . . . or else.

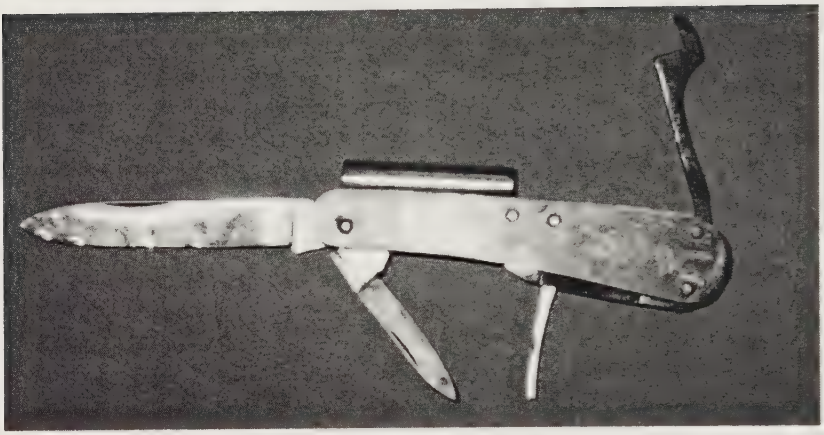
KNIFE GUN

Knife guns are unique among disguised weapons in that they combine one weapon with another, more deadly one.

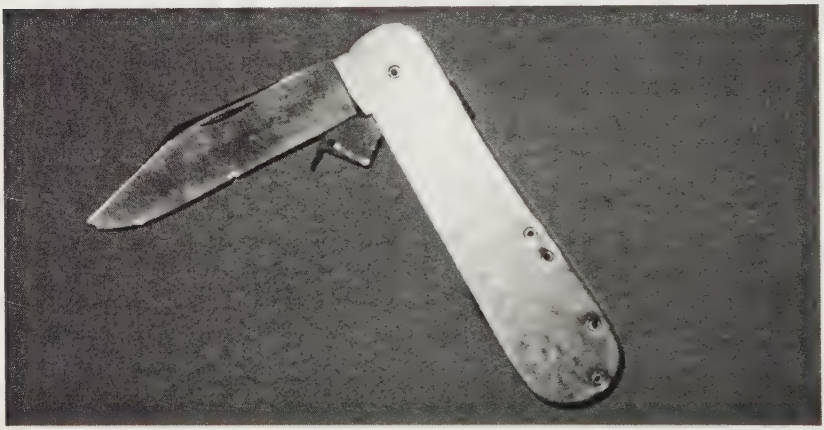
Such combinations are not new. When firearms were still in their experimental stages and edged weapons were the weapons of choice, swords, sabers, and even battle-axes incorporated modified firearms in their designs. Concealability was not an issue; the makers were simply attempting to improve the weapon's killing potential.

Knife guns are different, however. These weapons are manufactured with the sole purpose of concealing the firearm. Early examples include the James Rogers black powder knife gun, patented in 1837. Made popular during the 1920s and 1930s when pen knives

Unwin and Rogers single-shot knife gun.



.22-caliber knife gun, circa. early 20th century.



U.S. Small Arms Co. knife gun in .22 caliber.

were commonly carried and possessed by gentlemen from all walks of life, these guns, concealed as ordinary folding pocket knives, were sold openly at hardware stores and through the mail. Popular magazines even carried advertisements for them.

Single- and double-barrel models were produced, and they are still encountered today. Modern knife guns fire centerfire car-

tridges, are slim and sleek in design, and contain one or multiple blades. They can be fired with the blade open or closed. Capable of both cutting and shooting, these knife guns are extremely dangerous. The tiny single-shot barrels and receivers slide out of the knife's handle to accept the cartridge (usually a .22-caliber bullet). The firing mechanism consists of a cocking handle and small spring; when squeezed, it causes a bar to strike the primer and discharges the round.

Lethal up to 15 feet, most knife guns are approximately 4 to 6 inches long and weigh less than 16 ounces. Similar devices have been used and recovered in New York, Pennsylvania, Florida, and Chicago, as well as in numerous penitentiaries.

Any knife can cut and stab and should always be treated with care. Some models, however, may contain an even deadlier surprise. Therefore, officers should always exercise caution and inspect all knives thoroughly.

LIPSTICK PISTOL

Another item that can be traced directly back to the USSR's KGB is the lipstick case disguised as a single-shot pistol.

Never one to underestimate the capabilities of a woman in combat, the Soviet Red Army employed thousands of female soldiers during World War II. Afterward, during the Cold War era, the KGB employed women as spies and secret agents. This cleverly disguised weapon was produced for their personal carry. Lightweight and measuring only 3 inches long overall, the lipstick pistol was small enough to be hidden in bodily cavities, as well as in any makeup bag or purse.

Originally chambered for a 4.5mm round, the lipstick gun was ideal for KGB "greetings" (assassinations).

Lipstick pistol, chambered for .22 short.

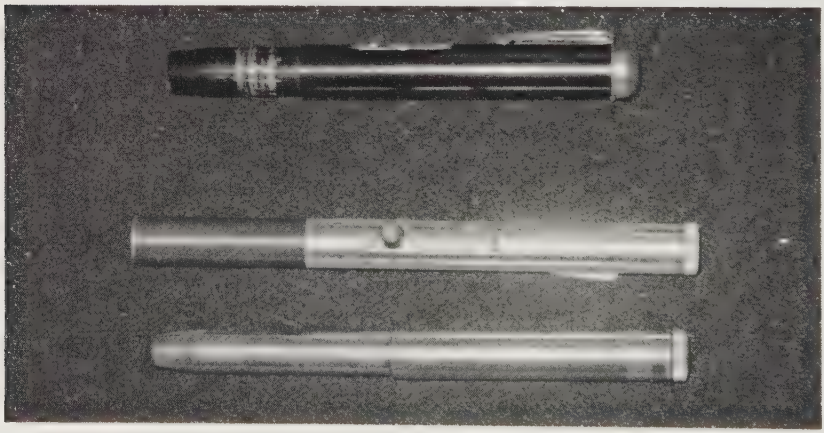
Today's modern version of the lipstick pistol is just as concealable and just as deadly but is chambered for the readily available .22-caliber short cartridge. It operates very similarly to an OSS Stinger. It is fired by rotating the knurled O-ring located around the neck of the lipstick case and is capable of producing lethal injuries from up to approximately 10 feet away.

Fortunately, lipstick pistols are not commonly encountered because they are difficult to produce. Nevertheless, officers should be aware of their existence. Surprise and horror may just result if a female prisoner's request to "freshen up" is granted.

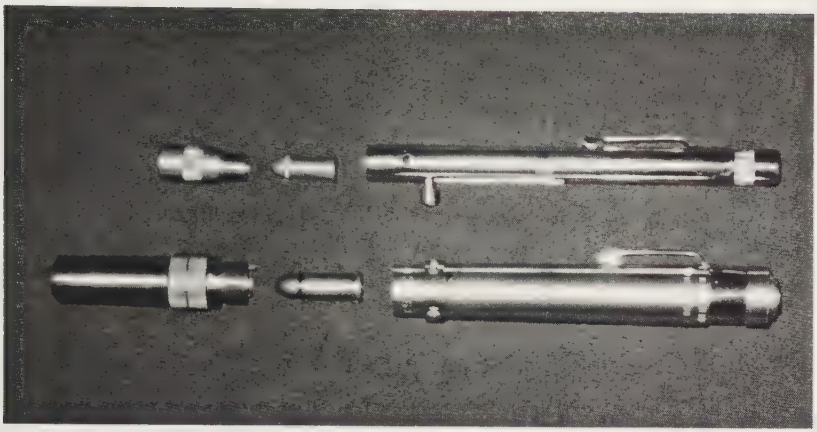
PEN GUN

The pen gun incorporates a simple yet clever design. According to many police departments across the United States, it is still the most commonly used and recovered disguised firearm. Today's modern designs can trace their roots back to World War II and a spy device called an En-Pen.

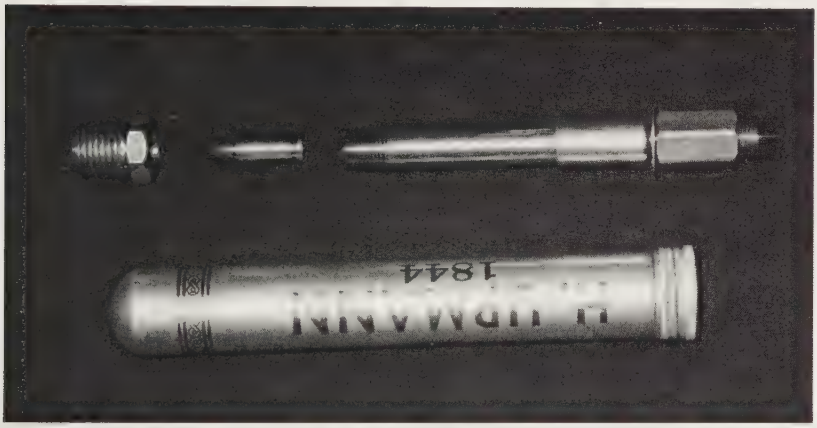
A single-shot .22-caliber weapon conceived by inventors of the Scientific Research and Development teams of the OSS, it was designed to resemble a fountain pen with the pocket clip doubling as a trigger. Measuring only 5 inches long, it was perfect as an emergency weapon. The only drawback with the En-Pen was that it was nonreloadable. Because of the popularity of the pocket pen



Assortment of pen guns.



Pen guns in .22 caliber (top) and .25 caliber (bottom).



Pen gun-like firing device concealed in a cigar tube.

and the success of the En-Pen, other disguised weapons were constructed around the pen. For example, a dart pen that used a powerful spring and compressed air to fire a small poisoned dart up to 40 feet was also developed around this time.

Today, pen guns are both professionally machined and homemade. Difficult to trace due to the lack of rifling in its tiny barrel

and absence of serial numbers or part numbers, the pen gun enjoys more success than ever. Most modern pen guns are single-shot weapons and, unlike the En-Pen, are reloadable. Length is usually restricted to 5 or 6 inches to keep within the size of a conventional pen. Thickness varies, depending on the caliber of the bullet used. Most pen guns are chambered for a .22- or .25-caliber round. However, .38-caliber versions have been produced, and authorities have even recovered some pen guns that fired a .410-gauge shotgun shell. Pen guns that fire these larger calibers often resemble a thick marker more than a pen, but the concept is the same.

Cocking and firing the pen gun is simple. The spring-loaded pin located on the side of the pen is merely pulled to the rear and released. The popularity and prevalence of such items even prompted New York Governor George Pataki to sign a new law in August 1998. It created a new crime of Criminal Possession of a Weapon 3°, a class D felony, for the knowing possession of a disguised gun (such as a pen gun), regardless of whether it is loaded or not. Under this bill, it is also illegal to manufacture or ship a disguised gun. A similar law was introduced in Massachusetts, where so-called gadget guns were outlawed.

Nevertheless, pen guns are widely available, easy to construct and use, and lethal.

PIPE PISTOL

Smoking pipes have been fashionable during many periods of history, lending an air of sophistication and distinction to their owners. Although not as popular today, they are still common enough that the sight of one would arouse little, if any, suspicion.

Probably one of the more intriguing disguised weapons ever devised, the pipe pistol has the appearance of an everyday smoking pipe but is extremely deadly.

The first pipe pistols were single-shot, nonreloadable emergency backup weapons issued to operatives behind enemy lines during World War II. They were also favored by pilots. To fire, the user held the bowl in one hand and twisted the stem with the other, causing the weapon to discharge. The pipe was then thrown away.

Other models continued to be developed throughout the years. Most modern examples contain spring-loaded firing mechanisms inside the pipe's stem. The mouthpiece is unscrewed, allowing insertion of a .22- or .25-caliber bullet. The weapon is then fired by pulling back on a small knob and releasing it.

Generally 5 to 6 inches in length and no more than 2 inches high, these pipe pistols have an effective range of up to 10 feet.

Another ordinary looking smoking pipe incorporates a trigger button near the mouthpiece and a barrel that extends the length of the stem and through the bowl portion. There was a belief that when the smoker bit down on the button in the mouthpiece, the bullet would then fire through the bowl. This is highly unlikely. However, such positioning would allow its user to point the business end of the

Pipe gun in .22 short.

weapon at its intended target while giving the appearance of filling it with tobacco or merely lighting it.

Capable of administering lethal wounds, pipe pistols are well known to the law enforcement community. Numerous specimens are held in museums around the world. However well known, pipes are usually regarded as harmless and thus invite potential hazards. Therefore, all pipes should be removed from a suspect's person and closely examined.

RATCHET WRENCH GUN

Found in vehicle trunks, toolboxes, and garage workbenches all across America, the ratchet wrench, more commonly known as a socket wrench, was first used as a disguised weapon in Word War II after an OSS scientist converted a standard socket wrench into a single-shot pistol in 1942.

Designed to give its user the ultimate element of surprise, this clever weapon fired a special .26-caliber cartridge. Modern versions, however, fire a .22-caliber round. Extremely dangerous, these weapons have been used and recovered in virtually all regions of the United States, as well as abroad.

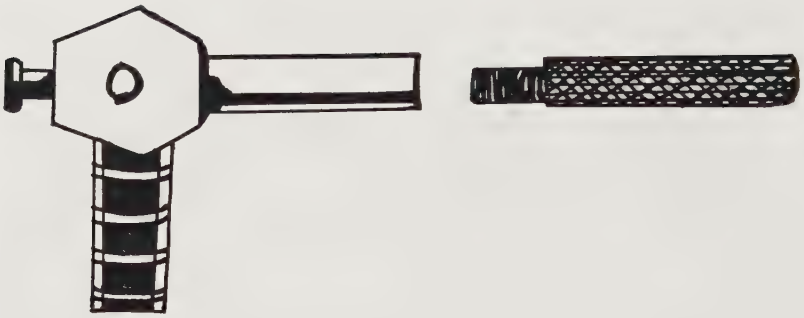
The gun measures 8 inches long overall, with the handle forming the barrel and the socket serving as the handle. To load it, the user simply unscrews the wrench and then places a live cartridge inside before threading it back together.

To fire the weapon, a small spring-loaded knob located at the head of the socket wrench is pulled to the rear and the trigger button is depressed with the thumb, discharging the round. Thus, the socket wrench pistol can be operated with one or two hands.

Powerful enough to kill a man with a single shot, these innocuous looking weapons have an effective maximum range of up to 15 feet.

The numerous examples held in private collections and museums around the world provide ample evidence that these weapons are not being made by amateurs. Professionally machined, this pistol is moderately rugged and so authentic looking that it will fool almost everybody.

Clearly a danger to all members of law enforcement, these



OSS ratchet wrench gun (disassembled).

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instruments give hand tools a bad name. Therefore, officers must always examine suspects carefully and be on the lookout for items that just don't fit. For example, does the suspect in custody have any need for a socket wrench? If not, satisfy your curiosity by seizing the item and inspecting it more thoroughly. Doing so could reveal a nasty surprise and may just save a life.

ROAD FLARE SHOTGUN

Routinely manufactured in basement workshops with components that are readily available in any hardware store, this deadly disguised weapon is fabricated to look like a common emergency road flare. Not only is the road flare shotgun inexpensive and easy to build, it is deceiving enough to easily fool unsuspecting passersby.

This weapon comprises two sections of heavy pipe and is approximately 15 inches long overall. One section of pipe that serves as a barrel that will accept the desired shell so that it seats firmly in the pipe's opening, and the second section acts as a receiver. One end of the outer (receiver) pipe is covered with a hefty metal cap containing a modified firing pin (usually made of an ordinary nail or screw). Fitted over this metal cap is a genuine plastic striker cap, such as is normally used to ignite conventional road flares.

Both sections of pipe are painted red or, in some cases, wrapped in red crepe paper. Some do-it-yourselfers have even gone as far as to print warning labels on the side of their devices utilizing a stencil, thus adding to the illusion.

To fire the weapon, a shotgun shell is inserted into the barrel end, which is then carefully fitted into the receiver end. With the receiver end held firmly in place, the barrel is rapidly pumped to the rear, forcing the shell's primer to strike the end cap's firing pin, which subsequently causes the round to discharge. Usually fitted with a 20- or 12-gauge shotgun shell, these weapons have an effective maximum range of up to 15 feet.

Officers should be familiar with and look for differences in

Road flare shotgun (fully assembled).

Road flare shotgun (disassembled and loaded with 12-gauge shell).

the shades of paint (as compared to an ordinary road flare) as well as any noticeable differences in the texture of the paper. Once the unit is in the inspecting officer's possession, of course, its weight should indicate that something is amiss.

In use for more than 20 years, these simple but effective lethal weapons pose an immediate threat to highway officers and patrol

officers investigating seemingly routine traffic accidents. Although rarely regarded as a potential deadly weapon, the road flare shotgun is a very real danger.

SCREWDRIVER GUN

Although it appears to be an ordinary screwdriver, this item is actually a lethal .22-caliber firearm.

The clever design replicates a type of screwdriver commonly sold in hardware stores that has a removable shaft and interchangeable bits that conveniently store in the handle. Closer examination, however, reveals a small knob on the side of the shaft used for cocking the weapon. Sharply releasing the spring-loaded action causes it to discharge a round. To load the weapon, the bit is removed and a live round is placed inside. Measuring 7 1/2 inches long and weighing only 10 ounces when fully loaded, the screwdriver gun is small enough and light enough to be carried comfortably on one's person.

Screwdriver gun, .22-caliber model.

Screwdriver gun, .22-caliber model.

Screwdriver guns have been recovered by police in the Midwest as well as abroad. Its disguised appearance makes it very easy to overlook upon casual searching.

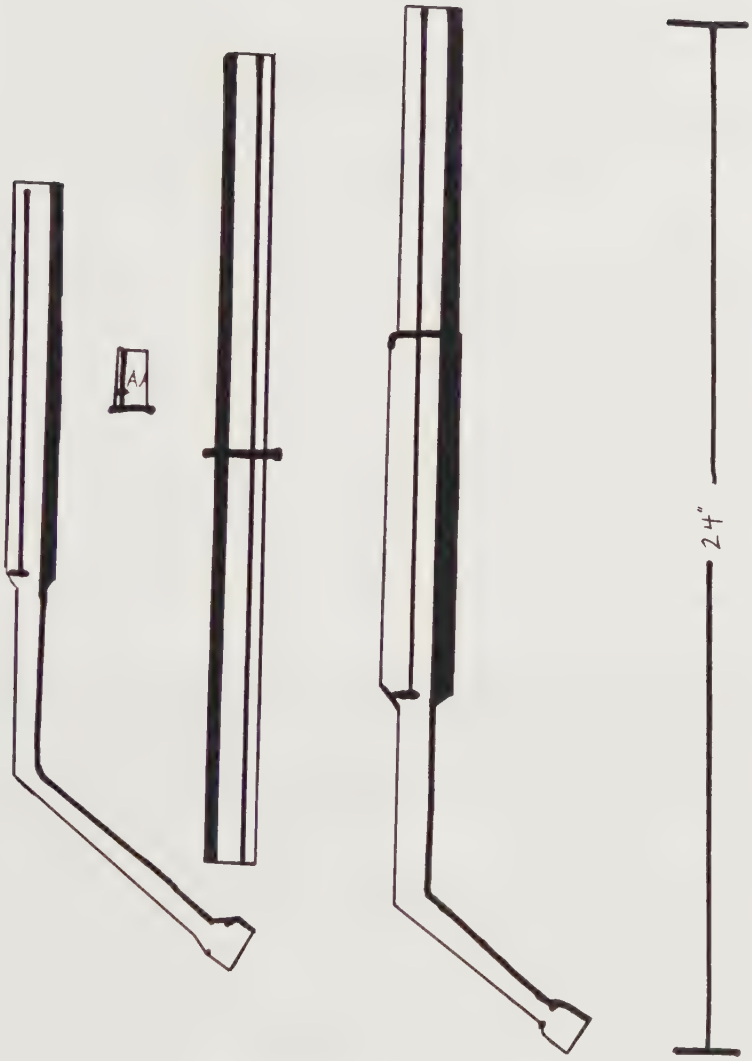
TIRE IRON SHOTGUN

Although it appears to be nothing more than an ordinary automotive accessory, this normal looking tire iron is capable of firing a powerful .410-gauge shotgun shell.

Simple in design, this weapon contains two sections and measures more than 20 inches long overall. The barrel, with a shotgun shell of the appropriate gauge in place, is inserted into the slightly larger tire iron portion, within which is a firing pin. The weapon is then fired by forcibly pumping the barrel back into the tire iron, which causes the shell to discharge. Lethal at up to 20 feet, the tire iron shotgun can easily kill or maim its intended target.

Its biggest disadvantage, however, is that it is a single-shot weapon. After one round is fired, the entire unit must be separated and then reloaded with a fresh cartridge. Note that this weapon will also fire a .45-caliber bullet, which has the same diameter.

Extremely dangerous, this cleverly disguised single-shot pump shotgun has come to the attention of police officials on more than one occasion. State troopers in Utah recovered two in routine car stops, and investigators in Boston recovered one following an alleged gang fight. Police raids of organized crime syndicates have also netted several tire iron shotguns.

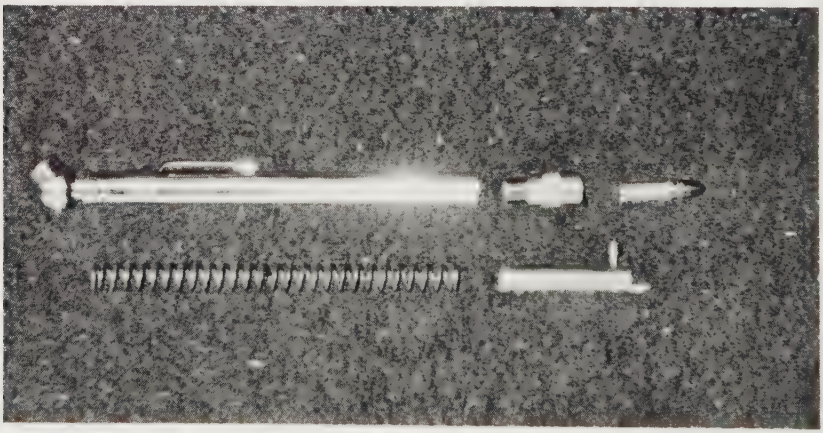


Tire iron shotgun in 12 gauge.

TIRE PRESSURE GAUGE GUN

The tire pressure gauge gun is a spring-loaded device that is similar to the modern pen gun in design except for the addition of a nozzle valve. Approximately 5 1/2 to 6 inches in length and weighing less than 6 ounces, it is almost indistinguishable from the real thing. Like the pen gun, this disguised weapon can be homemade or professionally machined.

A favorite among outlaw bikers and other criminals, the tire pressure gauge gun is capable of firing any .22-caliber ammunition, from .22-caliber short to .22-caliber long rifle magnum, and has an effective range of up to 20 feet. The user simply pulls back on the knob and releases it, driving the firing pin forward and discharging a round.



.22-caliber tire pressure gauge gun.

This tiny firearm possesses all the necessary qualities of a successful disguised weapon. It is built around the design of an item that is commonly carried and used for lawful purposes. It is small and lightweight. Most importantly, it is deadly.

Look for these in glove compartments, under driver's seats, or secreted in toolboxes. In addition, be aware of bikers, who may carry such items on their person since they do not generally have glove compartments.

UMBRELLA GUN

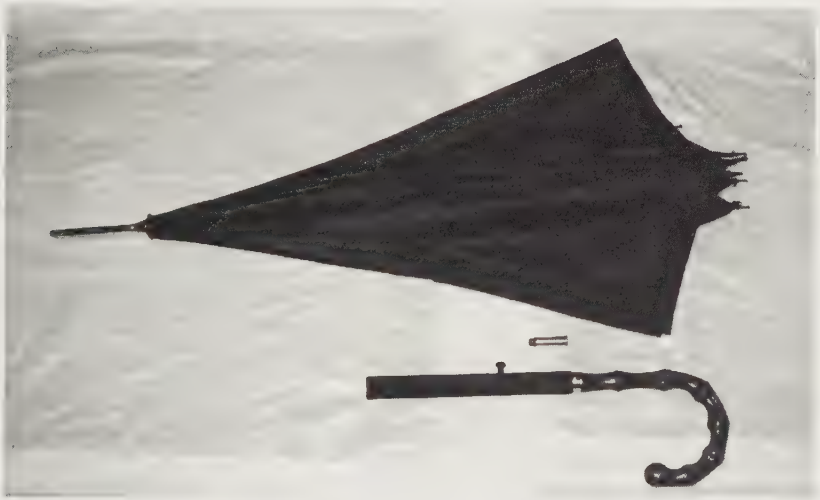
Another example of an item so commonly carried that it arouses little or no suspicion, the umbrella has been cleverly modified to house firearms on numerous occasions.

Old French designs incorporated pin-firing pistols into an umbrella's handle, while more modern versions have the firing mechanisms built directly into the handle. Before the umbrella gun can be fired at a target, the handle must be detached. Available in .38 caliber, .45 caliber, and .410 gauge, these weapons are as deadly as they are inconspicuous.

Interestingly, members of a Minnesota militia group selected umbrella guns for use in a failed assassination plot that targeted local government officials. Convicted in 1995, two members of the group produced a poison called ricin, which is made from castor beans, and inserted it into wax pellets that they fired from spring-powered umbrella guns.

Two homemade examples recovered in California were built from full-size, noncollapsible umbrellas. However, some umbrella guns are compact and collapsible and can be easily secreted inside a briefcase or in a glove compartment. Available in an array of colors, umbrella guns all have a trigger or cocking knob on the side of the handle. This is usually the only indication that the umbrella is actually a deadly weapon.

.38-caliber centerfire umbrella gun (closed).



.38-caliber centerfire umbrella gun (open).

WHEEL LOCK SHOTGUN

Steering wheel locks are as common on vehicles as license plates. Therefore, police officers conducting routine traffic stops and investigating traffic accidents or vehicle thefts would have little reason to fear a steering wheel lock. But this ordinary looking steering wheel lock is actually a powerful shotgun.

Measuring 18 inches long overall, this weapon consists of three parts. The handle end of the steering wheel lock is hollow and serves as a receiver. A 9 1/2-inch-long section of heavy pipe fits neatly inside this handle, serving as the barrel, and is loaded with a standard 20-gauge shotgun shell. Before the weapon can be fired, this barrel must be placed inside the handle or receiver. The third component is the locking arm, on the end of which is a sharpened modified firing pin.

To fire the steering wheel lock shotgun, the unit is held firmly in place with one hand while the locking arm is forcibly driven forward with the other into the primer of the shotgun shell. This causes detonation and will discharge a round up to a maximum effective range of 15 feet. Spread patterns will differ depending on the type of ammunition.

Perfect for surprising police officers, the wheel lock shotgun is also ideal for assassinations, as it can be used to shoot a victim and then tossed into the open window of an awaiting vehicle or simply discarded on the scene.

These disguised weapons are deadly, test-firing surprisingly well, according to reports from numerous police officers and state troopers across the nation who have encountered them. The majority of exam-

Steering wheel lock shotgun in 12 gauge (unloaded).

ples recovered in the past appear to be of the homemade version. A few, however, were expertly machined, which may be an indication that wheel lock shotguns are being produced commercially.

Regardless of their origin, these weapons can easily cause serious physical injury or death. Thus, members of law enforcement should view all steering wheel locks as potential hazards and handle them accordingly.

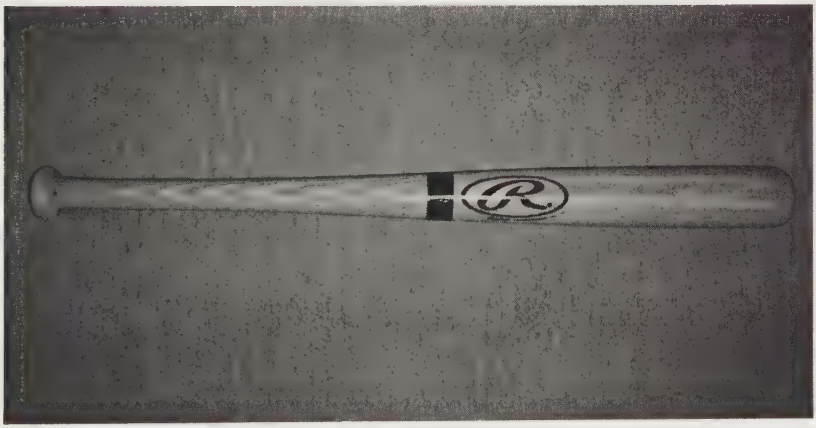
SECTION II:
EDGED WEAPONS

BASEBALL BAT ICE PICK

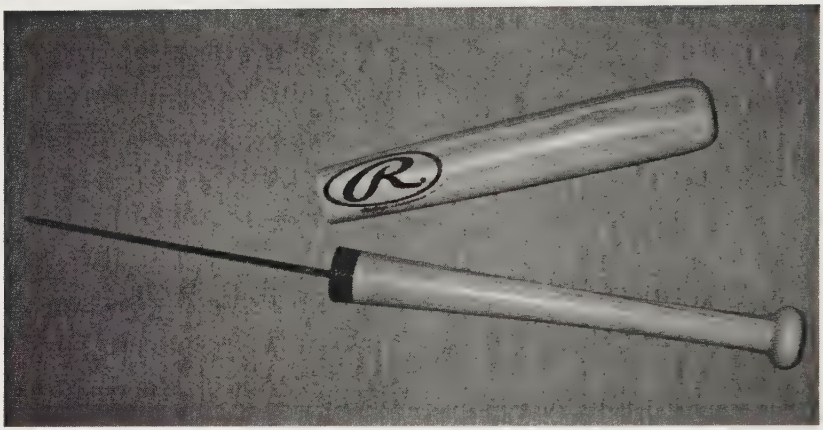
Similar to the miniature wooden bats commonly given away as promotional items at major league baseball stadiums, the baseball bat ice pick is one of the newest disguised weapons available.

What appears to be a harmless souvenir is really a menacing ice pick capable of producing lethal wounds. Measuring 13 inches long overall, the miniature bat pulls apart, separating at the band located midway up the handle. With little effort, a user can unsheathe the weapon's 6-inch triangular blade and attack an unsuspecting victim.

The hardened steel point easily penetrates 1/2-inch plywood and will certainly penetrate soft body armor. Designed for stabbing



Miniature souvenir baseball bat ice pick (closed).



Mini souvenir baseball bat ice pick (open).

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and thrusting, this destructive weapon is intended to penetrate the vital organs of an opponent.

Popular with juveniles, these items weigh only 13 ounces and can be hidden very easily inside backpacks and book bags. They are also small enough to fit in most pant and coat pockets.

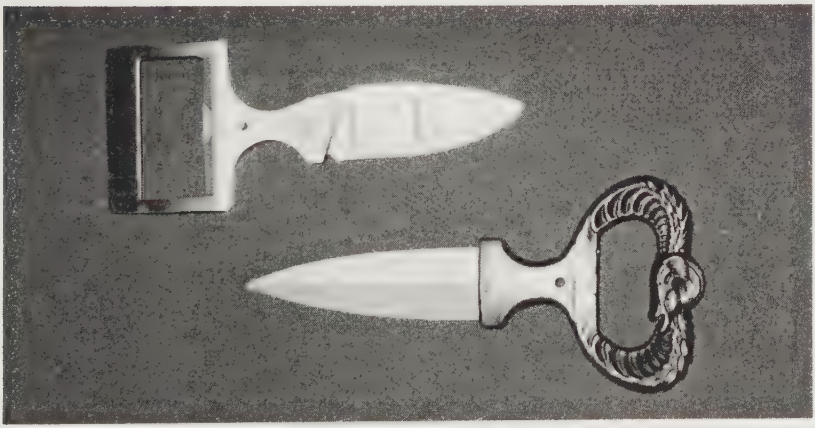
Officers unaware of these new weapons may mistakenly overlook them, assuming they are mere toys. These "toys," however, are killers.

BELT BUCKLE KNIFE

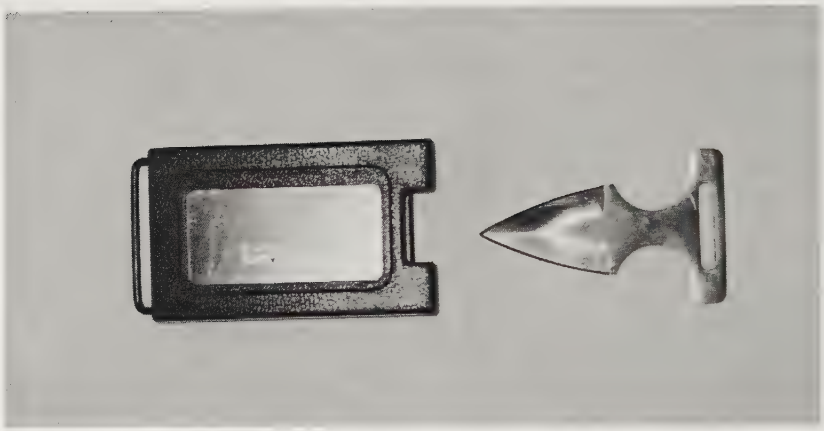
This disguised weapon emulates the unique push dagger, a knife made famous during the California gold rush days. Made popular by the gamblers of that era, the small daggers were double-edged and highly concealable.

Today's belt buckle knives are even more concealable because they are designed to resemble a belt buckle more than an actual knife. They are available in numerous sizes and styles, the most popular being the Bowen Belt Buckle Knife, manufactured by the Bowen Knife Company.

These knives fit securely into one's belt, which serves as a sheath. When the knife blade is in the sheath, the handle is used



Original Bowen Belt Buckle Knife (top) and copy (bottom).



Push dagger belt buckle.

as the belt buckle. When removed, the belt buckle doubles as a handle. Available in black or silver, with blades that measure approximately 2 inches in length, these belt buckle knives are virtually undetectable when worn properly. Copies exist in many different shapes.

Another variation consists of a black, rectangular buckle made of plastic. The metal face is often engraved with one's initials. Although harmless looking, this plastic buckle houses a double-edged push dagger with a 1-inch blade. Grasped between the fingers, this weapon is used to punch and stab. It will easily tear flesh and can be lethal.

The belt buckle dagger pictured above was purchased in New York's Chinatown for only $5. Belt buckle knives, of all types, are also widely available through the mail.

BRACELET KNIFE

Another popular form of jewelry that has been transformed into something much more devious is the bracelet knife. Available in an array of colors, this bracelet appears harmless, even flimsy. Constructed of pliable plastic, this simple adornment fits securely around the wrist until ready for use.

When the bracelet is pulled apart, a 3/4-inch surgical steel blade is exposed. Similar to a scalpel blade in design, this weapon can cause severe wounds. Numerous bracelet knives can be worn together on the same wrist, giving an arresting officer even more to be concerned about.

These items are widely available for only $3 to $5. Possession

Bracelet knife—small but deadly.

of such disguised weapons has become widespread among middle school and high school age children, and they have been utilized in a number of schoolyard assaults. As a result, numerous departments have issued memorandums regarding this dangerous weapon, and it is also highlighted in the U.S. Treasury Department's handbook on disguised weapons. Look out for these deadly instruments.

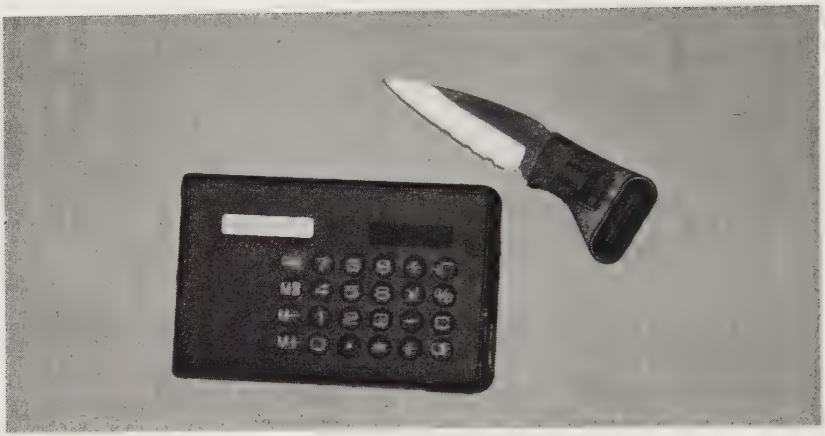
CALCULATOR KNIFE

Designed to imitate a conventional pocket calculator, this fully functional office tool has a 2-inch-long push dagger secreted inside a molded plastic sheath alongside the back. The entire unit measures 3 1/2 inches long and 2 1/4 inches high and, when closed, is indistinguishable from the real thing.

Calculator knives sell for around $10 and are available in a wide assortment of colors. Like ordinary pocket calculators, some are battery operated and others are solar powered.

Once popular with students, calculator knives have been recovered from adults on numerous occasions. Look for these cleverly disguised edged weapons in briefcases, pocket planners, and book bags.

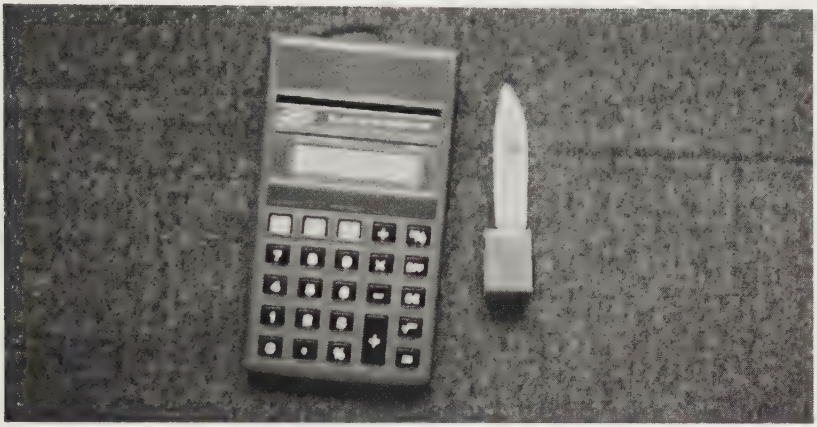
Solar calculator push dagger (closed).



Solar calculator push dagger (open).

Calculator knife (closed).

Calculator knives may be small, but they are razor-sharp. Used correctly, they can facilitate escape and cause serious injuries. An official NYPD memo from March 1999 highlighted these hazards.



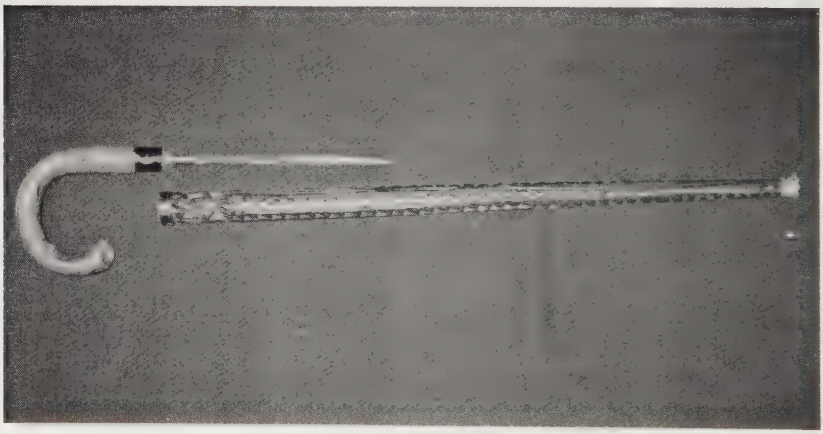
Calculator knife (open).

CANE SWORD

From the ninjas of feudal Japan to the 19th-century noblemen of Europe, people all over the world have used canes (or walking staffs) to conceal sword blades for centuries.

Today, cane swords remain extremely popular. Often sold at gun shows and through the mail, they are widely available on the open market. There are several companies that offer high-quality cane swords for around $30.

Approximately 3 to 4 feet in length, models may contain a single sword blade or combine a long blade with a shorter, dagger-type blade affixed to the handle. Sold in a wide assortment of popular finishes, including mahogany and black lacquer, many sword



Typical cane sword.

Cobra head cane sword (closed).

Cobra head cane sword (open).

canes are indistinguishable from the real thing. Because countless people carry canes, either to aid in walking or merely for style, a cane sword stands an excellent chance of eluding detection.

Used in conjunction with a feigned leg injury, cane swords pose a serious hazard to airport security personnel as well as to court and patrol officers.

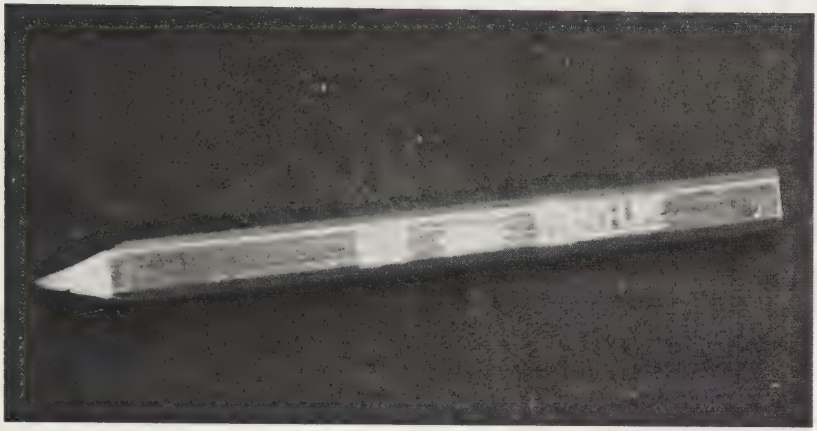
CARPENTER'S PENCIL KNIFE

Simplistic in design and small in stature, the pencil knife is nevertheless a suitable disguised weapon. Although the pencil casing measures more than 7 inches long overall, the knife blade itself is less than 2 inches long. But a 2-inch blade is more than capable of disabling its intended target if used to attack the eyes, ears, or throat.

The construction gives no indication that the fully functional pencil has a weapon concealed inside; it is even marked with a manufacturer's brand name. In addition to offering effective concealment, it is also capable of inflicting serious wounds.

A pencil may not appear to be an ideal disguise for a weapon. After all, an ordinary No. 2 writing pencil can be used as an effective stabbing weapon in and of itself and thus runs the risk of being confiscated by authorities anyway. Nevertheless, pencil knives and spikes have been in use for more than half a century. Today's designs actually write, and they pull apart easily to reveal the blade, making them much more convenient than earlier models. Pencil weapons issued to Chindit troops during World War II had to be broken apart to reveal their thin, fluted spiked blade. The blade, once removed, could then be used as a stabbing implement by itself or attached to a pole for use as a spear.

Numerous pencil knives have appeared throughout the Midwest and Northern regions of the United States, and they also appear to be popular in many Latin American countries. Stuck inside the pouch of a carpenter's tool belt, secreted in a briefcase, or stashed in a vehicle's glove compartment or center console, these items could easily escape detection.



Carpenter's pencil knife (closed).

Carpenter's pencil knife (open).

CELL PHONE KNIFE

Wireless, digital, and cellular technology have resulted in the widespread carry and use of cellular phones. Today, those who don't carry a cell phone seem to be the exception rather than the rule. Because of this almost universal popularity, the cell phone was a natural as a disguised weapon.

In 2000, a Southwestern police department issued a special bulletin warning officers to be on the lookout for two types of disguised cell phone weapons. Departments across the nation have encountered identical items.

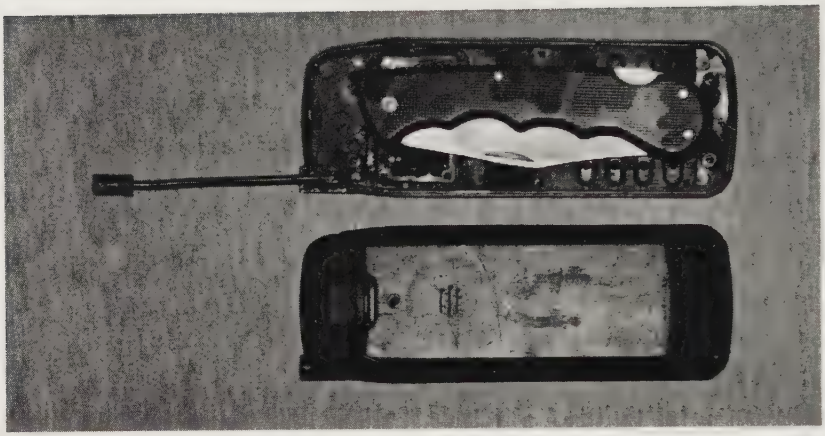
One version of the deadly cell phone is actually an ordinary, fully functional flip-phone that contains razor blades and/or handcuff

Cell phone razors (front view).

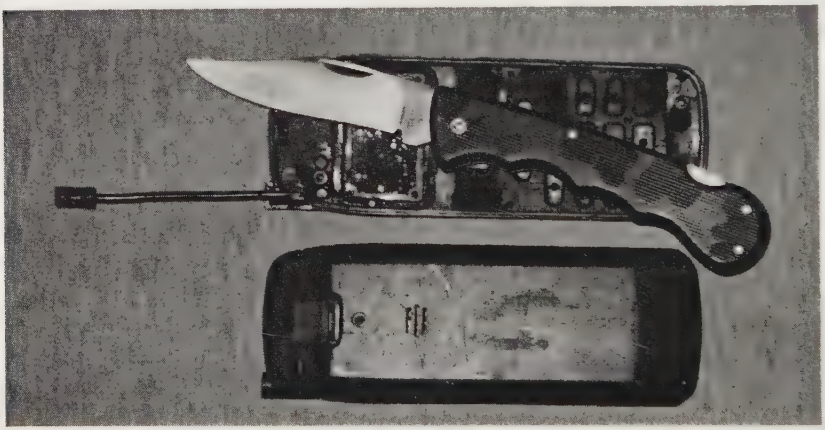
Cell phone razors (rear view, open).

Cell phone holster (closed).

keys. Removing the phone's battery reveals the hidden hardware. When the battery is locked in place, however, this phone works normally and gives no indication that it doubles as a weapon. Security agents have recovered a number of these at airport and courthouse checkpoints. The other type has the appearance of a regular cell phone but is actually hollow inside. The shell serves as a holster and



Cell phone holster (open) revealing closed folding knife.



Cell phone holster (open) revealing open folding knife.

can be used to secret small- to medium-size folding knives as well as miniature firearms, such as the baby .25-caliber automatics produced by various companies and the popular .22-caliber revolvers manufactured by Freedom Arms and North American Arms.

Security agents and law enforcement personnel should be cognizant that a cell phone is one piece of personal property that deserves special attention and should always be scrutinized.

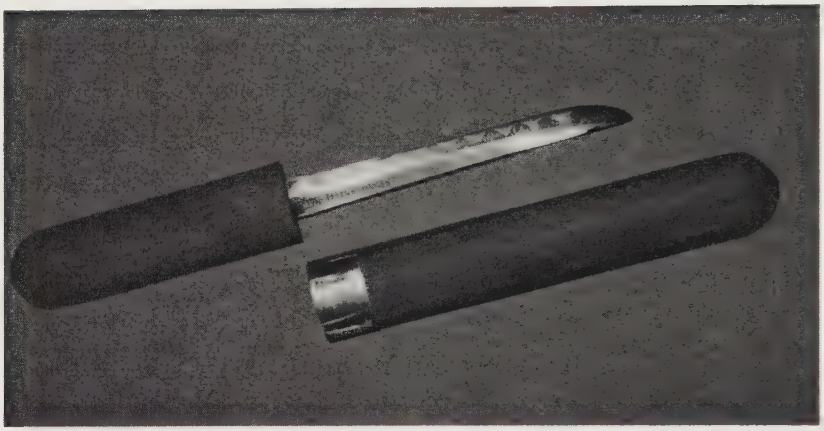
CIGAR KNIFE

One of the more interesting disguised weapons known to law enforcement, the cigar knife looks like a typical cigar with a natural brown wrapper. When pulled apart, however, the "cigar" reveals a sharp hardened steel blade. With an overall length of 7 inches and a blade length of 4 inches, the cigar knife is quite capable of producing lethal wounds with little effort.

The cigar's body is constructed of wood. A foil band around the body gives it a genuine appearance. To make the deception even more complete, popular brand-name cigar bands could be used.

Although it is doubtful that the wooden cigar knives are being mass-produced by a cutlery company (examples inspected by the author contained no manufacturer's markings), enough of these deadly instruments have been used in assaults and recovered by police to cause concern. A new type of cigar knife has emerged as well. Modeled after a real cigar in half scale, this model contains a plastic handle and has partially serrated knife blades. These are mass-produced and are sold openly through the mail.

Cigar knife (closed).



Cigar knife (open).

Some disguised weapons are successful because they emulate everyday items so closely that onlookers assume they are authentic. Others are successful because they emulate items that people would never imagine could be a potentially dangerous weapon. The cigar knife is a good example of the latter. It may appear far-fetched, but that suspect holding a seemingly harmless cigar and a match may be in possession of a deadly disguised weapon.

CIGARETTE BOX SWITCHBLADE

A homemade disguised weapon that has stood the test of time, the cigarette box switchblade is responsible for many vicious assaults. When mixed with the typical assortment of personal affects (such as keys, wallet, cigarette lighter, and the like), this device would hardly arouse any suspicion. That is why it has worked so well in the past.

The brand name on the cigarette box may vary, but the concept is identical: A flip-top, crush-proof box of cigarettes is emptied of its contents, and an automatic switchblade-type knife is inserted in its place. An opening cut into the lid of the box allows the blade to pass through when the knife is opened.

Cigarette box switchblade (front view, closed).

Cigarette box switchblade (front view, open).

Cigarette box switchblade (rear view, closed).

Like cigarette boxes themselves, these weapons will also vary slightly in size but generally measure between 6 and 9 inches long and 3 to 4 inches wide. Blade length is usually between 3 and 5 inches.

The first indication that this box of cigarettes is not what it appears to be is the black button indiscreetly positioned on the backside. It is the weight of the box, however, that ultimately gives it away. The average weight of a box of cigarettes is only 3 ounces;

Cigarette box switchblade (rear view, open).

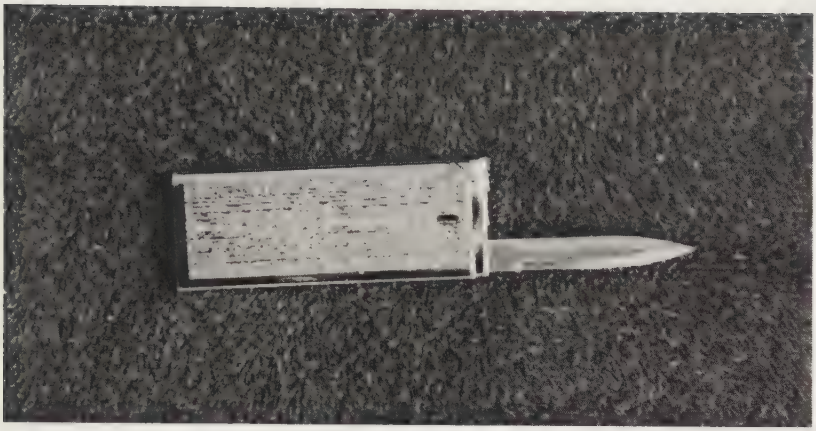
this nasty package is much heavier. The officer who assumes that it is an ordinary box of cigarettes based on appearance and fails to take possession of it places him/herself in grave danger. With its razor sharp, double-edged knife blade, this cleverly disguised weapon can easily kill or maim an unsuspecting law enforcement agent. Therefore, whether a suspect is in custody or is simply being questioned, a request for a smoke should only be granted after the box of cigarettes is examined and deemed safe.

CIGARETTE LIGHTER KNIVES

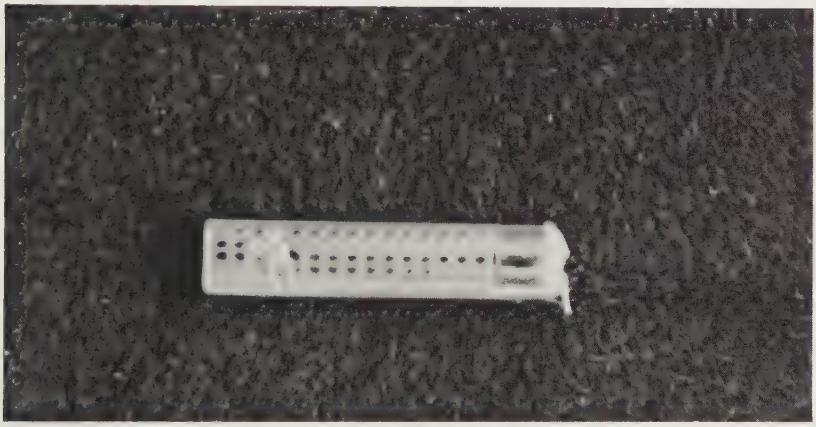
Law enforcement recovered a wide variety of knives disguised as cigarette lighters during searches at airports, courthouses, and correctional facilities. Cleverly constructed to have the appearance of ordinary cigarette lighters, these items are difficult to identify as deadly weapons.

One model, which measures 3 inches long and is 3/4 inch wide, comes in black, silver, and gold metallic finishes and may feature any number of designs. The small button on the back of the lighter appears to control the flame. When this button is depressed, however, a 2-inch-long spring-loaded knife blade appears and locks forward. Another model, similar to the slim, elegant lighters sold

Cigarette lighter switchblade (closed).



Cigarette lighter switchblade (open).



Cigarette lighter knife (closed).

today, measures 3 inches long and is only 1 1/4 inches wide and 1/4 inch thick. Available in either silver or gold, this lighter also contains a small button on its backside. When the button is depressed, a 2-inch-long knife blade springs forward, ready for use. Both models are functional butane lighters that retail for less than $10. Other versions exist as well.

Although harmless looking, cigarette lighter knives are dangerous

Cigarette lighter knife (open).

instruments capable of inflicting serious and even lethal injuries. Therefore, members of law enforcement must remain on alert for them when searching or interrogating suspects.

COMB/BRUSH KNIVES

Designed for uses much more sinister than mere grooming, these fiberglass combs and brushes contain a deadly surprise.

These disguised weapons are widely available at novelty shops and through the mail and come in two basic configurations. The pocket comb retails for $3 to $5. Measuring 8 inches long overall, it can be pulled apart to reveal a 3 3/4-inch blade of either hardened steel or unbreakable Zytel plastic. The latter version will not register on metal detectors, offering an obvious advantage. The steel blade version weighs less than 8 ounces, and the all-plastic model weighs only 4 ounces. The hairbrush retails for approximately $5. It measures 8 1/4 inches long overall and features a 4-inch blade that can be

Comb knife (closed).

Comb knife (open).

Fiberglass brush knife (closed).

made of either steel or Zytel plastic. The steel blade version weighs 8 ounces, while the all-plastic model weighs less than 5 ounces.

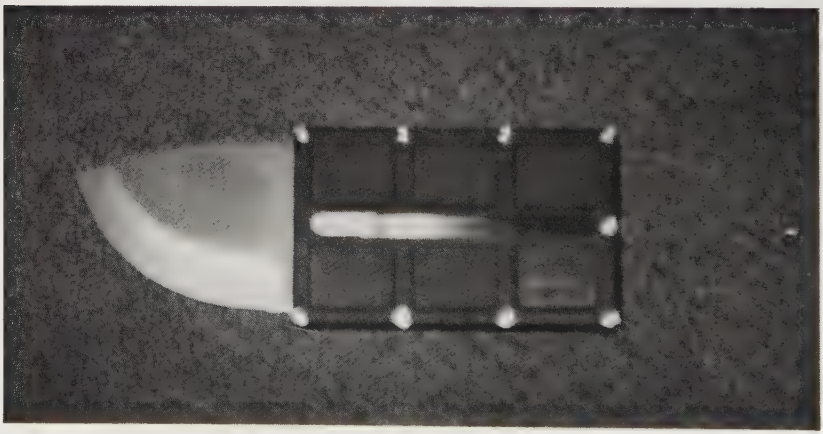
Both configurations are surprisingly well made, and both are capable of inflicting serious injuries. Easily secreted inside a pocket, handbag, or purse, these disguised weapons should not be overlooked—or underestimated.

Fiberglass brush knife (open).

CREDIT CARD KNIVES

Credit cards are as common today as the wallets and billfolds in which they are carried. Today's economic system practically guarantees their possession by young and old alike. Precisely because it is such a common item, the credit card's transformation into a potentially deadly disguised weapon was practically inevitable.

Widely available through mail-order outlets and novelty and cutlery shops, credit card knives come in numerous variations, each with its own distinct features. Overall size is the one feature that is shared by all existing models, as this is an integral part of the credit card knife's successful disguise. Approximately 1 1/2 inches high and 3 inches wide, these weapons conform to the standard mea-



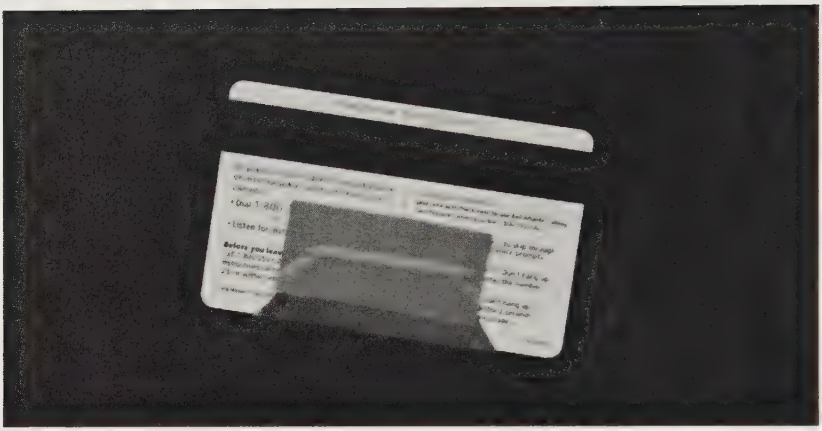
Tekna retractable credit card knife.

Credit card knife (push dagger type).

Razor card (front).

surements of bank ATM, check guarantee, and credit cards, except they are about twice as thick.

The Tekna security card houses a 2-inch stainless steel retractable blade that is as wide as the card itself. Other models contain a small push dagger that is neatly locked in place inside the holster-like card until released by the push of a button.



Razor card (back).

The Victorinox Swiss Card contains a small knife blade, a file, and a can opener, to name a few. Available in red, blue, green, and purple, it's a virtual toolbox for your wallet that retails for around $20.

The last type of credit card knife is the homemade one. Razor blades are commonly taped to the back of an ordinary credit card or driver's license and positioned in a manner that will hide the blade behind the face of the card while allowing its razor-sharp edge to protrude from out of the bottom. When presenting the card to an officer for identification, the user can easily utilize its business end to slice and tear flesh.

Hidden inside wallets behind other cards, these knives are all virtually impossible to detect.

CRUCIFIX NECKLACE KNIFE

Tiny, but potentially dangerous knives are often concealed inside ordinary looking jewelry bearing the shape of a crucifix. Worn around the neck, these disguised weapons can easily escape detection for two reasons. First, a small necklace can go unnoticed during a visual or even casual search. And second, even if they are noticed, their resemblance to religious articles can cause them to be dismissed as harmless tokens of faith. Therefore, law enforcement officers and security agents often fail to confiscate these weapons.

Although small, the 1- to 1 1/2-inch blades are razor-sharp and can be used effectively to jab the eyes or face. An arrested or

Crucifix knife.

Crucifix knife.

detained prisoner could employ such a weapon to assault and then disarm their escorting officer.

Agents patrolling the Mexican border have encountered a variant of this weapon on numerous occasions. As Special Operations Inspector Robert Gross reports, the weapon is disguised in the form of "a gold or silver crucifix worn around the neck . . . about 6 inches long. On the cross is a figure of Jesus, which, when pressed, causes a 4 1/2- to 5-inch knife blade to come out and down from the bottom of the long post. The knife can then be used like a knuckle knife held in the fist, by the cross bars." Therefore, all religious pennants should be examined carefully and confiscated if there is any doubt as to their authenticity.

FIBERGLASS KNIVES

Commonly sold as "letter openers," fiberglass knives are not disguised weapons per se but deserve special attention, nevertheless.

Constructed of tough ABS plastic and fiberglass, these slim, lightweight knives are virtually indestructible and highly concealable. They can be tucked or taped about the body and are therefore difficult to detect during a casual pat-down. More importantly, their construction prevents detection by magnometers (metal detectors).

Although plastic, their edges can be ground to a sharp point easily with a simple file and will cut and tear flesh with little effort.

One model, the CIA Letter Opener, retails for approximately $5. It measures 6 1/2 inches long and only 1/4 inch thick and

Assortment of fiberglass "letter openers."

weighs less than 4 ounces. Another model, the Delta Dart, measures 8 inches long, is only 1/2 inch thick, and weighs less than 2 ounces. This product is routinely offered as a free gift or promotional item with merchandise ordered through various mail-order catalogs. Sold individually, it retails for $3.

Variations of these knives, which can produce lethal results when used properly, have been recovered in numerous prisons and courthouses, causing concern for corrections and court officers alike.

FLOWER BOUQUET TANTO

Ideal for greeting targets and then assassinating them, the flower bouquet tanto has been used in assassinations for more than seven centuries. Unlike the long-stemmed boxed roses (which just scream "shotgun"), this lifelike bouquet of plastic roses raises little alarm, allowing the attacker to approach an intended victim with ease. This weapon is highly appealing to the assassin because it is lightweight, inexpensive, and deadly.

The plastic and wire stems of the flowers are bound and affixed to a plastic boot, which allows the insertion of the tanto and provides a tight fit. To complete the ensemble, a generous portion of crepe paper is wrapped around the tanto and the flower stems. The

Flower bouquet tanto (wrapped for presentation).

Flower bouquet tanto (unwrapped).

disguised weapon is now ready for use; unwrapping the razor-sharp tanto is unnecessary because the 7-inch knife blade will easily penetrate the crepe paper covering and tear into the unsuspecting target.

When no longer needed, the tanto can be removed from the plastic boot with ease and discarded (although sometimes it is taped in place to further secure the business end of the weapon).

This cleverly disguised weapon could easily fool even the most experienced law enforcement agent. What makes it even more dangerous is that an assailant can draw as close to a target as needed without ever revealing the weapon's true form.

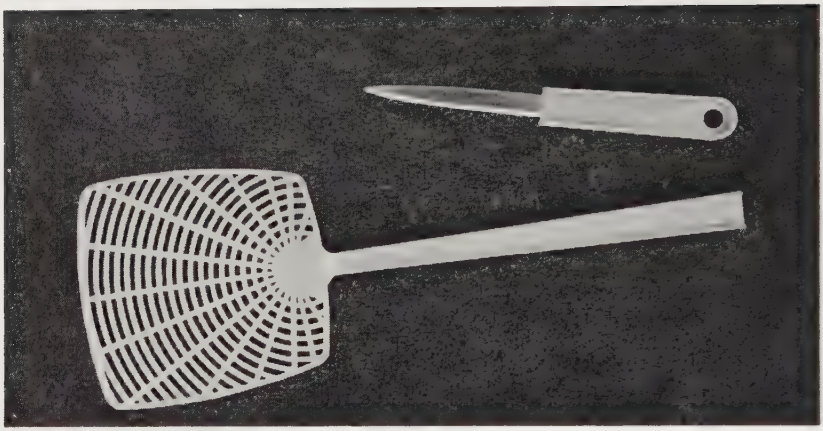
Weighing only 14 ounces and available for around $25, this unique item is both appealing and deadly.

FLY SWATTER KNIFE

Mimicking an item that's commonly encountered during the warm summer months, this plastic fly swatter does more than keep pesky insects away.

These relatively inexpensive but deadly disguised weapons are sold in novelty shops and cutlery stores in a wide assortment of colors. Measuring 16 inches long overall, they look identical to the real thing. A casual observer would hardly notice the separation in the center of the handle, which, when pulled apart, exposes a razor-sharp 5-inch double-edged blade, ready for use. The extra weight inside the handle does make the fly swatter unevenly balanced, however, and may give an

Fly swatter knife (closed).



Fly swatter knife (open).

inspecting officer an indication of the hidden hardware concealed inside.

Using a fly swatter as a deadly instrument may not seem plausible, which is exactly why this item is successful as a disguised weapon. Once again, the more harmless its appearance and more unorthodox its design, the more likely a weapon will escape detection. Officers must always remain cognizant of this and train their eyes to look for the unexpected.

HIDEAWAY KEY CHAIN

This key chain is constructed of tough rawhide leather and sports a metallic letter initial (presumably matching the owner's name). Although harmless looking, like the many other weapons of similar design, it serves a dual purpose. The leather piece actually forms a pouch big enough to carry coins or a subway token.

Carefully stitched, this hide-away key chain is effective because it gives no indication of a hidden compartment and could easily go unnoticed. This pouch has also been used to conceal razors and could surely hide other items as well.

Hideaway key chain (closed).

Razor blade hidden inside key chain.

HIDEAWAY WATCH

Some watches are worn for their elegance, much like a piece of fine jewelry. Other watches are sportier and are worn at both work and play. The hideaway watch resembles the large sport and SCUBA diving watches and is used to secret contraband.

Openly sold in stationary stores, shopping malls, and through the mail for $10 to $12, the hideaway watch comes in various colors, with bright and fluorescent colors being the most popular. Fully functional, this timepiece is very convincing. There are two buttons on each side of the watch face, which is customary on modern watches and only enhances this weapon's disguise. Two of the buttons are completely false, while a third controls the watch itself and sets the time. The fourth button, when depressed, releases a latch and enables the watch face to swing open. The hollow crevice inside, although not considerably large, is roomy enough to hide not only a small quantity of drugs but numerous razor blades and/or handcuff keys as well.

Numerous police departments have recovered these items, and many times they didn't discover them until after the prisoner from whom they were confiscated had already been processed and transported from a precinct or station house to arraignment.

Although hideaway watches may not be weapons per se, they can contain deadly little surprises that could pose a threat to any law enforcement officer or agent.

Hideaway watch (closed), ready for wear.

Hideaway watch (open) with razor and handcuff key.

KUBATON KEY CHAINS

Most people carry keys as part of their personal effects, and most carry these keys on some sort of key chain.

Of the many variations of so-called self-defense weapons made in the form of key chains, one extremely popular design is the Kubaton mini-baton and its numerous variants. Although immediately recognized by martial artists, these key chains are not weapons per se, and thus are legal to possess.

However, the Kubaton can be used very effectively as a hand-to-hand combat weapon. Grasped in the hand with the fingers wrapped around it tightly to form a fist, it can be used to strike a victim with either the body of the baton or with the keys attached to its steel key ring. The tapered end of the Kubaton is designed to be applied to nerve pressure points, producing intense pain. This allows an experienced user to apply arm bars and wristlocks more easily to restrain or control a person.

Another disguised weapon that takes the form of a Kubaton is the hollow Kubaton key chain. A favorite among martial arts enthusiasts, this item has been on the market for many years and is sold at flea markets and novelty shops around the country for around $10. Available in black, silver, and gold and measuring 5 1/2 inches long, this mini-baton houses four throwing spikes (used very similarly to throwing knives) in its shaft. These extremely sharp 4-inch spikes, constructed of case hardened steel, are hidden from view until the Kubaton is unscrewed and separated. Although advertised as throwing spikes they can also be grasped in the hand and used as stabbing instruments. Used in this manner, Kubaton throwing

Hollow Kubaton key chain (closed).

Hollow Kubaton key chain with spikes (open).

spikes become lethal ice picks that can easily escape detection when possessed individually.

Recently highlighted at a summit on school violence as one of the more popular weapons carried by children today, these Kubaton spikes are potential killers.

Newly available on the market, a similar disguised weapon

Keychain stiletto (closed).

Keychain stiletto (open).

based on the popular Kubaton design contains a concealed stiletto-type blade. Measuring 5 3/4 inches long overall and weighing only 7 ounces, the Kubaton stiletto is indistinguishable from the more common key chain it is designed to emulate. But when unscrewed, this Kubaton reveals a 4-inch steel blade locked in place inside. The blade is extremely sharp and

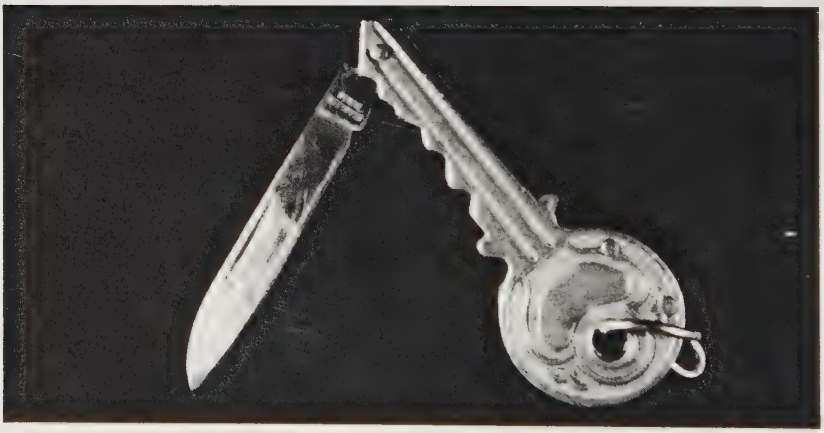
can produce lethal wounds very quickly; soft body armor is no match for it.

Because Kubaton key chains can be utilized as weapons by themselves, any such item should automatically be removed from a suspect. But in addition, their shafts should be checked for hidden weapons. Taking this small safety precaution may just save a life!

KEY KNIVES

Key knives are small, discreet, and inconspicuous. As disguised weapons, they achieve their purpose well. While giving the appearance of innocent-looking house keys, they can pass even the most thorough inspection. Yet any of the various models can inflict horrific wounds.

The folding knife key is the same size and thickness as a standard house key and is brass in color. Although rather cheaply made, it has a 2 1/2-inch blade that can be used effectively to cut and jab a victim's face, throat, and eyes. Sold at gun shows and novelty shops around the nation, key knives have become a favorite among juveniles.



House key folding knife. (Photo credit: Police Officer Tom McGroder.)

Swiss-Tech key knife on key chain.

Swiss-Tech key knife (open position).

Another example is the plastic razor key. Measuring 2 inches long and available in an array of colors, this key contains a 1/2-inch razor blade that extends and retracts by depressing a small button on the key's casing. These are widely available and inexpensive.

The Swiss-Tech UtiliKey is the most recent variant. Available for under $20, this sturdy key knife measures 2 inches long, weighs

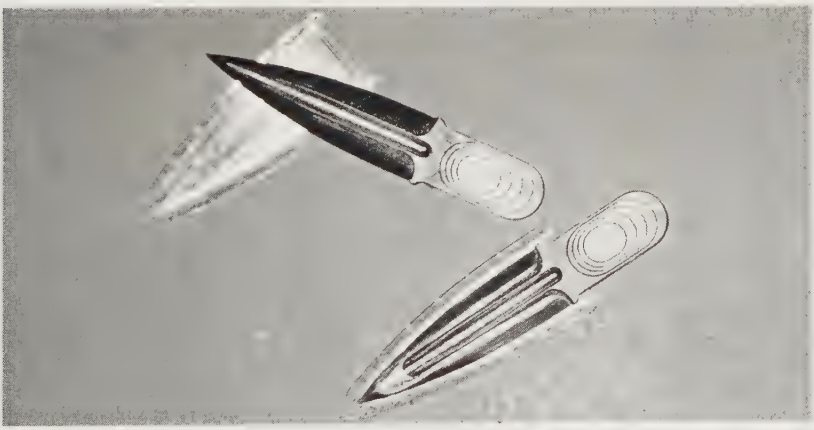
0.5 ounce, and features a razor-sharp straight edge and serrated knife blade. This weapon's existence has already prompted more than one major metropolitan city to issue memorandums to their police departments.

When combined with a normal set of keys on a key ring, or even in a leather key case, they are remarkably difficult to identify and therefore pose a serious threat.

LAPEL KNIFE

A lapel knife is an old weapon originally intended for military personnel deployed in enemy territories. Also known as a thumb dagger, it is only 1 1/2 inches long and is highly concealable when sewn into the lapels of jackets. While older models were constructed of metal, modern ones are constructed of ABS plastic and fiberglass, which enables them to pass through metal detectors unnoticed.

Lapel knives are cheap, retailing for $3 to $5 each, and are widely available from mail-order companies and shops. Gripped between the thumb and forefinger of a user's strong hand, they can be used to jab an unsuspecting victim in the eyes and face, causing



Fiberglass lapel daggers.

substantial pain and possible blindness. They may be plastic, but these double-edged blades are extremely sharp.

Only careful searches will enable law enforcement and security agents to uncover these deadly items. Look for them.

LIPSTICK KNIFE

The lipstick knife owes its success to two factors. First, it is built into an item that is commonly carried for legitimate purposes and is therefore not regarded as a possible threat. Second, lipstick is predominantly carried by females, who are less likely to be searched thoroughly by members of predominantly male police departments. It may be biased, but most people do not regard females as dangerous perpetrators, which is exactly why the lipstick knife can and often does pass inspection.

Available in numerous colors, lipstick knives are sold openly at novelty shops and cutlery stores as "self-defense" items. The lipstick knife is 3 inches long and weighs less than 4 ounces.

Lipstick knife (extended position).

Outwardly, it looks exactly like an ordinary tube of lipstick; however, when the end of the tube is twisted in the traditional manner, a 1 1/2-inch knife blade emerges. Although small, this blade can cause serious wounds to the eyes, face, and neck.

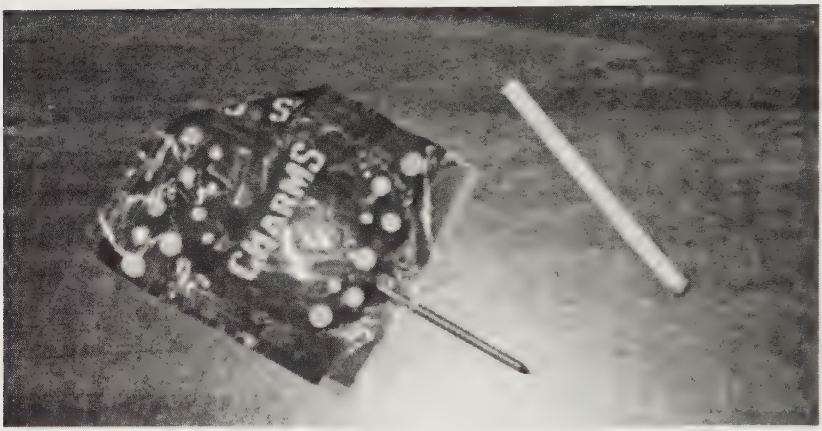
Look for these on the person or in a makeup bag.

LOLLIPOP KNIFE

The lollipop knife is a small piece of genius that was reportedly first made available at a Pennsylvania gun show by a local knife maker.

Constructed in the shape of a lollipop for the sole purpose of deceiving an onlooker, this weapon consists of a colored disk made of plastic or resin affixed to a 3-inch hardened steel triangular spike capable of penetrating bullet-resistant vests. The disks, which are usually 1 or 2 inches in diameter and approximately 1/2-inch thick, are covered by an ordinary lollipop candy wrapper to enhance the disguise, and what appears to be the lollipop's stick is actually a hollow plastic tube that acts as a sheath.

Lollipop spike (closed).



Lollipop spike (open).

There is sufficient concern over this edged weapon, which is especially popular with juveniles, that the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the State Department, and the New York City Police Department (NYPD) have all issued memorandums warning law enforcement agents of its existence.

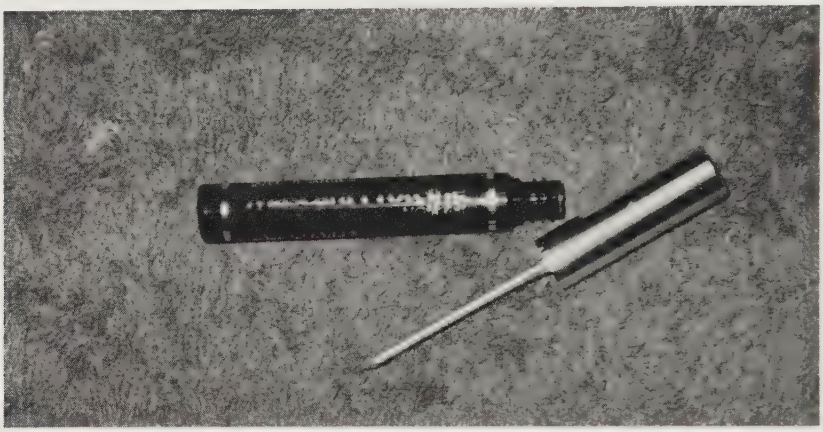
Whether carried on one's person or inside a bag or lady's pocketbook, the lollipop knife could conceivably be dismissed as candy and thrown out or, worse, returned to a perpetrator after being apprehended.

MASCARA KNIFE

Yet another disguised weapon fashioned for women, the mascara knife is clever and deceptive. Commonly carried by women in their makeup bags, a tube of mascara will pass visual inspection almost every time.

Retailing for under $15, these popular disguised weapons were recently available on the Internet and pose a serious hazard to officers searching or transporting female prisoners. Made from actual mascara tubes, these units measure approximately 5 to 6 inches in length and weigh less than 8 ounces. Unscrewing the plastic cap/handle reveals a nasty surprise: instead of a brush applicator, a 2-inch-long triangular blade is permanently affixed to the handle, ready for immediate use.

Mascara knife (closed).



Mascara knife (open).

Although small and unimpressive looking, these weapons can kill when used to attack the neck and facial area. Statistics show that although most violent crimes are still committed by males, the percentage committed by female offenders is on the rise. Thus, law enforcement agents should never assume that they are safe from attack just because their suspect is female; her request to "freshen up" can turn deadly.

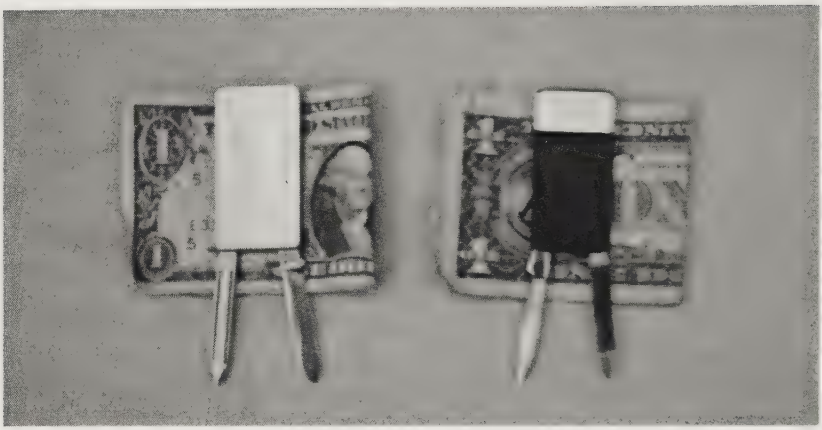
MONEY-CLIP KNIFE

Used for generations to secure bills of currency, money clips are still popular today and therefore are ideal as disguised weapons. The money-clip knife is an accessory that is as dangerous as it is practical.

Measuring approximately 2 to 2 1/2 inches long and 1 inch wide, money-clip knives are small and lightweight but razor-sharp. They generally contain either two hidden blades or a knife blade and file combination. When closed, they are extremely difficult to spot and identify as a weapon. When opened, the exposed 1 1/2-inch-long blade can be used to cut and stab an unsuspecting victim.

Sold at department stores, cutlery shops, and even jewelers,

Money-clip knives (closed).



Money-clip knives (open).

these items are widely available. Prices vary depending on quality; some money clips are expertly made and decorated. Regardless of their grade, however, these clips all pose a very real danger. Therefore, when instructing suspects to empty their pockets, officers must check for these weapons.

NAIL POLISH SPIKE

One of the many disguised weapons marketed specifically for women, this inventive device is marketed for "self-defense."

It consists of a normal 0.50-fluid-ounce bottle of acrylic nail polish and a cap/brush applicator that is unscrewed and removed to produce a small but formidable weapon. Instead of a nail polish brush, a 1 1/2-inch metal spike is affixed to the cap, which serves as a handle. This tiny shank is essentially unbreakable and will inflict severe wounds. Because of its size, it can be placed between the fingers and used as a punching weapon.

Available from a number of mail-order companies specializing in self-defense products, these nail polish spikes are readily obtain-

Nail polish spike (closed).

Nail polish spike (open).

able and inexpensive. They are also extremely easy to duplicate at home. The sizes of the bottles and colors of polish may change, but the concept is still the same.

Officers who routinely fail to search the personal effects of female suspects carefully because they assume an attack is improbable would be wise to think again. A female gang member armed with one of these innocuous looking bottles of nail polish recently attempted to assault a rival gang member during a schoolyard fight. Although no one was seriously injured, the attack could have proven disastrous.

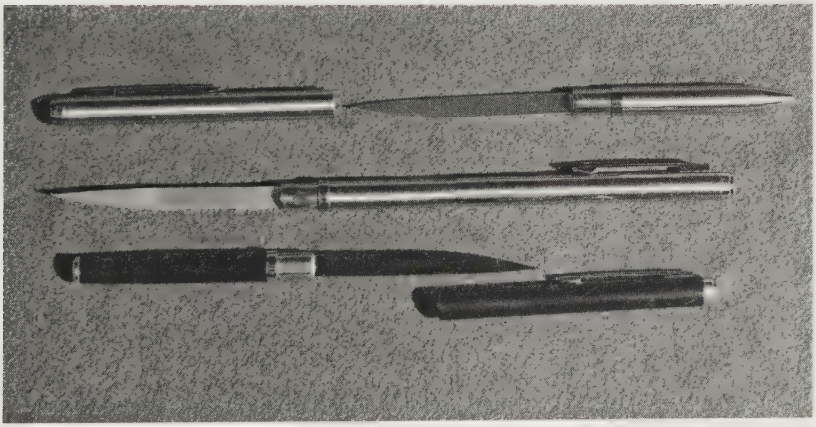
Because they are based on an ordinary item that females carry in their handbags and pocketbooks daily, these deadly instruments can successfully deceive an onlooker and go unnoticed by arresting officers.

PEN KNIVES

As many law enforcement sources will attest, the fountain pen is commonly used to conceal deadly devices. Its use as a disguised firearm for more than half a century is well documented, as noted in the first section of this book. Naturally, the pen's pull-apart design has made it a popular item for incorporating other weapons as well.

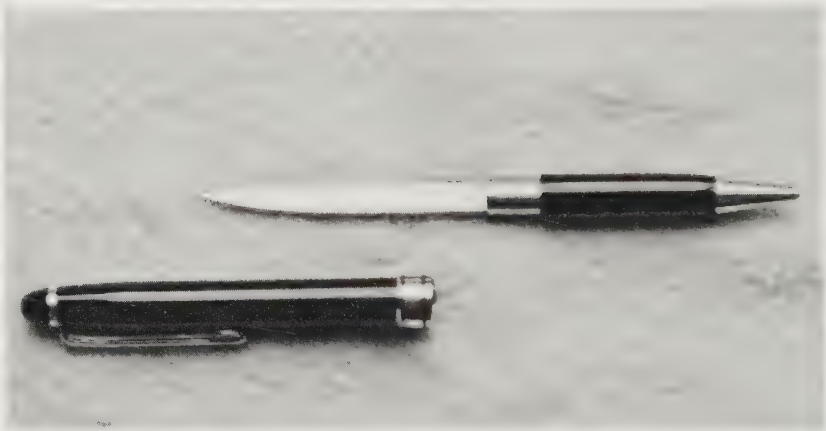
Pen knifes are easier and cheaper to manufacture than pen guns. The marketing of such knives is also less troublesome than that of their firearm counterparts, making them more appealing to manufacturers.

With the many variations available today, it is estimated that



Assortment of pen knives.

Executive pen knife (closed).



Executive pen knife (open).

there are close to 1 million pen knives in circulation. Thousands have been used in crimes and recovered by police.

The most common type of pen knife is one that resembles a simple metallic pen.

Widely available in either silver or black for a retail price of only $5, it is fully functional as a writing instrument, containing

Guardfather pen knife (closed). (Photo credit: Author, courtesy of Police Officer Jeff Isgro.)

Guardfather pen knife (open). (Photo credit: Author, courtesy of Police Officer Jeff Isgro.)

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blue or black ink. But when the top and bottom halves of the pen are pulled apart, in addition to an ink cartridge, a blade approximately 3 inches long is exposed.

A more distinguished looking pen, the Executive pen knife is slightly more expensive and is available in black, chrome, maroon, and teal green. However, its concept is exactly the same. When the two halves of the 5-inch-long pen are pulled apart, a 3 /12-inch partially serrated knife blade is exposed, ready for use.

Another example of a pen knife, easily obtained through mail order for approximately $30, is the Guardfather. Professionally machined, this 6-inch, all-metal device contains a powerfully spring-loaded 4-inch ice pick-like shaft that projects outward when the pocket clip is pushed. The Guardfather can easily be operated with one hand and will penetrate soft body armor.

The last type of pen knife traces its roots back to World War II. Manufactured in the Philippines during the war and commonly carried by combatants stationed there, this knife resembles a typical ballpoint pen until it opens up and swivels apart like a butterfly knife, revealing a 4-inch, double-edged

knife blade. Unlike other pen knives, this device does not function as a pen.

Due to their prevalence and deceptiveness, all pens should be treated as potential weapons and be examined thoroughly.

PLAYING CARD THROWING KNIFE

Because of the sharp increase in school violence in recent years, more and more media attention has focused on the weapons being used on school grounds today. Juveniles, in particular, favor disguised weapons so that they can defeat the search efforts of school officials and police.

One weapon has attracted more attention than most, seeing service from upstate New York all the way to Hawaii. *Honolulu Advertiser* staff writer Alice Keesing describes it as "playing cards that are designed so that you can throw them and injure somebody because they are metal." The disguised weapon she speaks of is the playing card throwing knife, which is available at cutlery shops and martial arts supply stores as well as through mail-order catalogs or on the Internet. It retails for $20 to $30.

Sold as a set of five under the brand name Royal Flush Throwing Cards, this weapon consists of a ten, a jack, a queen, a king, and an ace of any desired suit (hearts, diamonds, spades, or clubs). Measuring 3 1/2 inches high and 2 3/4 inches wide, these dangerous weapons are the same size as ordinary playing cards. The difference, of course, is that these are constructed of solid steel and have all four sides ground to a fine, razor-sharp edge. Although each set of throwing cards comes packaged in a handsome black case, a single card knife could easily be inserted into a deck of playing cards and secreted into virtually any secured area.

The card knife will cause vicious cuts and lacerations when thrown at a victim, but because this requires a significant amount of practice and skill, it is often held in the attacker's strong hand

Playing card throwing knives.

and used as a cutting instrument to slice a victim's face or other body part.

Popular among martial artists and knife buffs, playing card knives are also favored by middle-school children and incarcerated prisoners. Although new on the market, this innovative and clever weapon is extremely common and poses a serious threat to police and school safety personnel as well as corrections officers. The reasons are obvious. What appears to be a friendly card game could turn deadly.

PUSH DAGGER BEEPER

Carried by adults and juveniles alike but especially popular with students attempting to enter schools equipped with metal detectors, the push dagger beeper can easily fool security officers or guards, who may mistakenly assume that a metal detector is sensing the metal in the beeper itself.

Even if subjected to visual inspection, the push dagger beeper can easily be overlooked. The same size as a conventional beeper, this unit measures 3 inches long overall and its body actually houses a 1 1/2-inch push dagger capable of inflicting serious physical injury. Small but deadly, the knife, which is removed manually through the display window located on the top of the beeper, has a

Push dagger beeper (closed).

Push dagger beeper (open).

black, nonslip grip and can be concealed inside the palm of one's hand until ready for use.

This clever design should serve as a reminder to all police officers and agents to remain alert—even when searching children and their belongings—for weapons that may be disguised as everyday items.

RAZOR GUM

Successful disguised weapons need not be sophisticated or elaborate. They do not need to have large blades or readily fire a bullet. They merely need to be constructed in such a way as to deceive the casual onlooker and remain hidden until ready for use.

If a perpetrator does not have the means to purchase or otherwise acquire a marketed disguised weapon, he can simply make his own. Sometimes intelligent ideas are transformed into deadly reality without much construction at all. Razor gum is a good example of this.

A drug offender arrested in New York produced this nasty item. Unable to find a more exotic disguised weapon to his liking, the suspect simply wrapped a standard razor blade in a popular brand-name gum wrapper. He then carefully placed his hidden hardware inside the already opened gum pack between two other sticks of gum. There was virtually no increase in the weight of the pack of gum.

Arresting officers only discovered this hidden threat after recovering a small quantity of marijuana from an opened pack of cigarettes. Alerted to the offender's methods of hiding contraband, one officer wisely removed the sticks of gum from the pack and inspected them for additional goodies. When he felt a hard, metallic object inside one of the sticks, he carefully unwrapped it to reveal the potentially dangerous blade.

This item illustrates the simple yet ingenious methods suspects use to conceal weaponry. If the razor blade had not been discovered, the suspect's simple request for a piece of gum could have

Chewing gum razor blade.

turned deadly. Officers are reminded to search every piece of personal effects a suspect brings with him to the station house or booking area. The life you save may be your own.

RING KNIVES

Because rings are traditionally bestowed as gifts and awarded for achievement in sports and the military, they are extremely common and are not likely to arouse any suspicion. A small circular band worn as an ornament on a finger may appear harmless, but it can actually be a deadly weapon.

Conventional rings are already dangerous enough, as they provide aid to a closed fist much like a pair of brass knuckles does. But this pales in comparison to rings manufactured to contain tiny hidden blades.

Ring knives range in price from $10 to $50 and are available at some jewelry stores and novelty shops. They may also be found at

Ring knives.

motorcycle shops that sell clothing and apparel. Many variations exist. Some models contain actual knife blades made of hardened steel. Others contain raised metal spikes that form razor-sharp jagged edges. All are capable of tearing flesh and causing terrible wounds. A number of homemade examples have been encountered as well.

To maximize concealment, the ring is normally worn backwards so only the band is visible and the business end is hidden. When rotated, this disguised weapon is ready for use. Countless assaults have been committed in this manner.

Easy to conceal and use, ring knives (like most disguised weapons) are far more harmful than they appear.

SHAVING CREAM BRUSH ICE PICK

Common during the Cold War era, shaving cream brushes were hollowed out to secret coded messages or even maps of an area. But today's version of this concept contains something much more deadly.

Encountered by correctional officers in numerous institutions, this item appears to be nothing more than an ordinary shaving cream applicator, but when the base is separated from the brush (some models are screwed together and others simply pull apart), a hardened steel icepick-like spike is revealed. Indistinguishable from the real thing, this 4-inch shaving cream brush has a 1-inch blade inside. Available in various colors, these disguised weapons are

Shaving cream brush ice pick (separated).

offered for sale through mail-order catalogs, cutlery shops, and novelty shops and retail for around $15.

These small and discreet but dangerous instruments could easily be smuggled into restricted areas in shaving kit bags or carried loosely in a pocket, as officers who have recovered them in numerous prison cell-block shakedowns will attest to. Hospital police in the Northeast recently recovered such a weapon from a homeless man admitted as an emotionally disturbed patient, which illustrates an important point: homeless people are known to carry all their possessions either on their person or in a bag on their person, and sometimes these personal effects include seemingly nonthreatening implements that can quickly be utilized to ambush an officer. Although small, the shaving cream brush ice pick can cause serious injuries and will penetrate body armor.

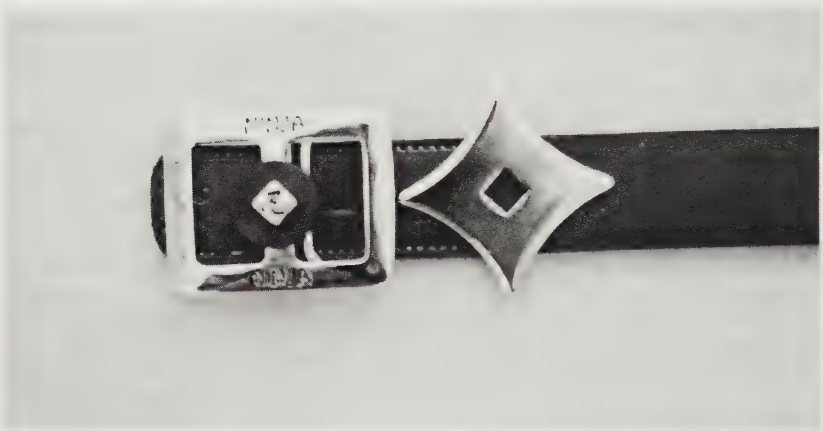
Correctional officers and matrons should be on the lookout for this item, as underestimating its usefulness based on appearance alone could be disastrous.

SHURIKEN BELT BUCKLE

Dating back to medieval Japan, shurikens, or Chinese stars, were thrown at adversaries to distract them or slow them down. They can also be used as effective stabbing or cutting instruments when held in the hand.

Measuring 3 1/2 inches long and 2 1/2 inches high and weighing 6 to 8 ounces, this sturdy star-shaped belt buckle appears to be nothing more than a novelty item or fashion statement. When the metal star is turned, however, it is dislodged from the buckle's metal and rubber base and becomes a formidable weapon. Removing the star does not hinder the buckle's ability to secure the belt. The metal shuriken, which is surprisingly well made, has four

Shuriken belt buckle.



Shuriken belt buckle.

sharp points. It can be tossed at an adversary either overhead or sidearm with a quick motion.

There are square and round models, and they come in either silver or black finishes and are adorned with Japanese characters and designs. Retailing for only $5 to $10, shuriken belt buckles have become extremely popular with adolescents. They are widely available by mail order and can also be found at flea markets, cutlery shops, and martial arts supply stores.

When searching suspects, officers must remember to inspect belt buckles, removing them for maximum safety.

SHURIKEN NECKLACE

Whether consisting of a piece of bone or tooth on a rawhide string or an expensive gem suspended from a fine braid of gold, the necklace is a popular form of jewelry. It was only logical, then, that people would produce weapons disguised as necklaces. The shuriken is one of the least eccentric but most popular necklace weapons.

Available at martial arts supply stores, novelty shops, or through the mail, the shuriken necklace is simply a Chinese star with a hole drilled through its body. A chain or thick piece of rawhide is inserted through the hole so that the star can be worn around the neck. Some shuriken even come with a predrilled hole; others come complete with the hole and the chain or lanyard.

These little weapons can contain anywhere from three to ten sharpened points. The four-pointed and star-shaped models appear

Shuriken necklace.

to be the most popular. These are lightweight—usually 4 to 6 ounces—and measure approximately 5 to 6 inches in diameter. Colors are usually black, silver, or gold.

The shuriken necklace can be held between the thumb and the forefinger and raked across a victim's face or hurled through the air so that it hits the victim's eyes, temple, or throat.

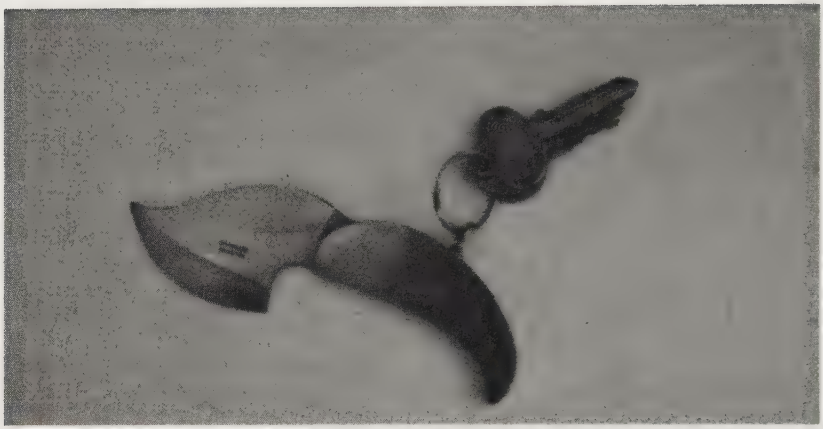
Although illegal in many states, these mischievous weapons are abundant and pose a real threat to security and law enforcement personnel.

SILVER LEAF KEY CHAIN KNIFE

Like every other disguised weapon, this key chain is not what it appears to be. When closed, it measures 3 inches long and looks like an elegant leaf dangling from one's key chain. When the silver leaf is opened, however, a razor-sharp 420 stainless steel blade is revealed. Measuring 2 inches long from stem to point, this blade extends the length of the weapon to 4 inches overall.

This clever weapon, which will easily cut and tear flesh, could very well pass a visual inspection. Because it is constructed solely of steel, it will set off a metal detector. However, normal procedures require people at airports and courthouses to empty their pockets into a bin before proceeding through the metal detector. Their personal items are then returned. Unless the security officer discovers the silver leaf and identifies it as a weapon, it is likely to pass into restricted areas.

Silver leaf key chain knife (closed).



Silver leaf key chain knife (open).

Available at cutlery shops, from street vendors, and through the mail, the silver leaf key chain knife is rugged but inexpensive, retailing for around $10. Manufacturers continue to sell this and other types of pocket-sized key chain weapons because they are small, lightweight, and easy to operate and are therefore popular with consumers.

This nasty little item illustrates the importance of carefully examining keys and always remaining alert.

SLAP BRACELET

This accouterment, known as a slap bracelet, became a teen fad in the nineties. Measuring 9 inches long and 1 inch wide, the bracelet remains rigid until slapped against one's wrist. The metallic strip then coils around the wrist, forming an attractive and unique piece of jewelry. When the bracelet's cloth covering is removed, only the thin metal strip remains. Grinding the strip's edges transforms this simple piece of thin metal into an edged weapon capable of producing serious injuries.

Readily available at gift shops, at local shopping malls, and even inside grocery store gumball machines, slap bracelets are inexpensive and discreet.

Slap bracelet on wrist.

Slap bracelet with covering removed.

Responsible for countless schoolyard assaults, these disguised weapons are a favorite among juveniles. Although never intended for use as weapons, slap bracelets became so synonymous with violence that police departments began issuing memorandums warning officers of their deadly potential. Law enforcement agents must remain cognizant of such trendy items and the hazards that accompany them, and always remember to search juveniles with utmost care.

STEERING WHEEL LOCK SPEAR

Routinely sold as antitheft devices at department stores, hardware stores, and automobile parts stores, steering wheel locks provide inexpensive insurance to millions of car owners. But there is more to some steering wheel locks than meets the eye. Instead of thwarting criminals, the steering wheel lock spear will actually aid them.

This devious new disguised weapon was first discovered by a state trooper on a routine car stop in 1999. Indistinguishable from a real steering wheel lock, it measures19 inches long overall and has two sections. When assembled and locked in place with a fitted key, this motor vehicle accessory is fully functional. When the two

Steering wheel lock spear (closed).

Steering wheel lock spear (open).

sections are separated, however, a 16-inch edged weapon is revealed. Nothing more than a metal rod with a sharpened spear-like point, it is extremely deadly, nevertheless.

Available in red or yellow, these disguised weapons were initially being produced in home workshops. Today, they are being mass produced and sold on the black market.

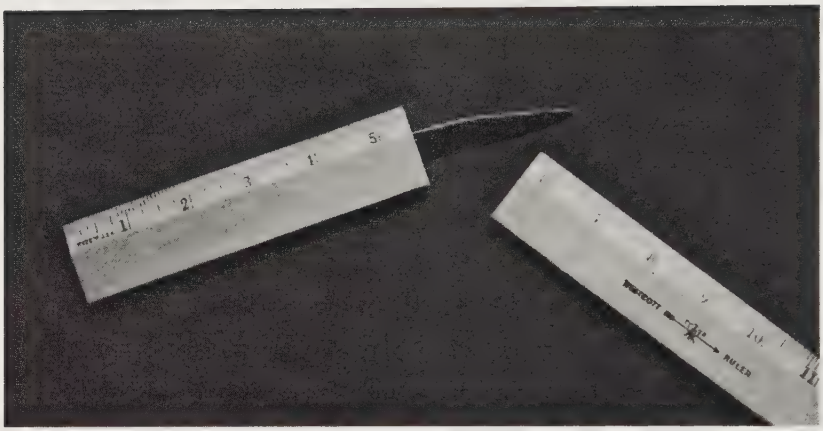
Regardless of where they originate, these items pose a serious threat to anyone conducting investigations in or around vehicles and illustrates exactly why officers must remain alert at all times.

STRAIGHT RULER KNIFE

What appears to be an ordinary straight ruler can, in fact, be a deadly weapon. This 12-inch wooden ruler, sold in stationary stores as an office tool or letter opener, separates to reveal a 4-inch steel blade. Typical of the thin metal blades utilized in letter openers, it can be sharpened by hand with a simple whetstone.

The ruler knife retails for less than $10 and is difficult to detect, making it particularly popular with juveniles. Simple and inexpensive, it is nonetheless capable of inflicting lethal wounds. Similar items have been recovered inside middle schools and high schools, where students can easily secret them in backpacks and book bags. Officers should also search toolboxes, briefcases, and notebook binders.

Straight ruler knife (closed).



Straight ruler knife (open).

TAPE MEASURE HOLSTER

An item commonly used for secreting contraband and transporting small but deadly weapons is the hollow tape measure casing. Clipped to one's tool belt or pocket, it offers instant access while remaining totally discreet.

These "holsters," which are indistinguishable from the real thing, normally utilize 25- and 30-foot casings and are usually restricted to edged weapons such as folding knives and metal throwing darts or stars. Possible indicators for police and security personnel are excessive weight and/or a loose rattling noise produced when an item housed inside is improperly secured.

One inquisitive officer recently discovered a dangerous folding

Tape measure holster (closed).

Tape measure holster (open) with closed folding knife.

Tape measure holster with open knife.

knife hidden in this manner. After recovering a tape measure from a suspect arrested for possession of narcotics, the officer observed a rather unusual brand name on its outer casing. Believing that Slaymaker was an inappropriate brand name for a tape measure and indicative of something more harmful, the officer inspected the unit more closely and discovered its hidden hardware

Tape measure shuriken (closed).

Tape measure shuriken (open).

(although further investigation revealed that Slaymaker is a real tool brand name).

Available in almost any size or color combination, this disguise for a weapon is utilized more often than most officers would think. Carried on one's person, in a glove compartment, or in a toolbox, tape measures are common enough that they usually will not

arouse any suspicion. Furthermore, if questioned, a suspect can generally ease an officer's tensions by claiming he works in any number of professions that require the use of a tape measure.

Although not the most exotic of designs, these disguised weapons can still produce tragic results if overlooked.

TIE CLIP KNIFE

This item is one of the few disguised weapons fashioned from a piece of men's-only jewelry. Stylish, elegant, and rugged, the tie clip knife enables the distinguished gentleman to carry a razor-sharp blade wherever he may go. Available in silver and gold metallic finishes as well as black onyx, these tiny knives are so inconspicuous they could pass even the most thorough body search.

Manufactured by fine-quality knife makers and available at cutlery shops and fine jewelers, these innovative new disguised weapons are rather expensive, selling for as much as $100. The meticulously detailed 1 1/2-inch to 3-inch tie clip expertly conceals a 1-inch-long knife blade that is extremely sharp and more than

Tie clip knife (closed).

Tie clip knife (open).

capable of causing serious injuries. All moveable hardware is hidden beneath the initial or design on the face of the tie clip. Not all models lock in place; however, most are designed to be opened with only one hand.

Used to attack a victim's eyes, throat, and facial area, the tie clip knife, despite its small size, makes an ample slashing or stabbing instrument.

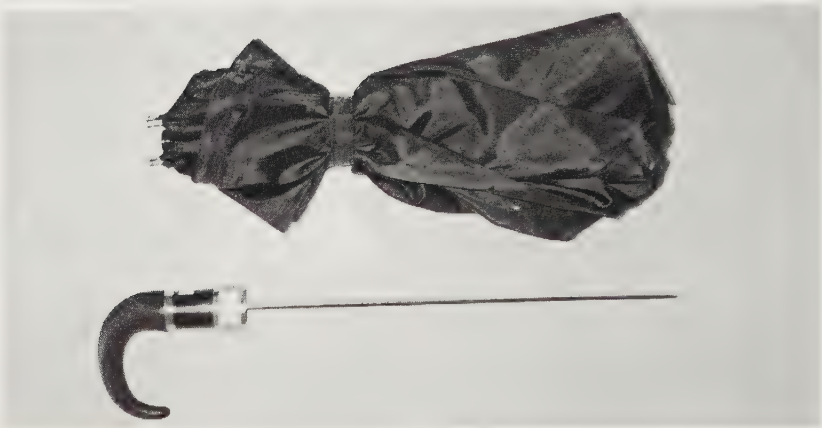
The clothes may make the man, but this handy little weapon can make a suspect an even more dangerous man. Therefore, for optimal safety, all personal effects must be scrutinized. That seemingly harmless Father's Day present can easily become a killer.

UMBRELLA SWORD

Measuring only 18 inches long, this appears to be nothing more than a typical collapsible umbrella, commonly carried for its convenient compact size. Unlike its department store counterpart, however, this umbrella houses a 10-inch sword blade in its telescoping stem. The sword, made of tough, durable surgical steel and tapered to a fine point, will easily penetrate soft body armor.

An expertly machined disguised weapon, this clever device, which retails for less than $50, is sold openly at gun shows and cutlery shops, as well as through the mail. Available in either black or red, the umbrella sword is also fully functional as an umbrella. Because the sword will only disengage with the proper twist-and-

Umbrella sword (closed).



Umbrella sword (open).

pull action of the handle's ring, this weapon could be mistaken for an ordinary umbrella, even after thorough examination.

Whether stowed away in a vehicle's glove compartment, stuffed inside a briefcase, or carried under one's arm, the umbrella sword could surely go undetected by all but the most alert security officers.

VEHICLE ALARM PAD KNIFE

Another "self-defense" product disguised as a key chain, this item was recently discovered outside the station house of a local police precinct in the Northeast.

Similar in appearance to a vehicle's alarm pad key chain, it is unlikely to arouse any suspicion if spotted. It measures 2 1/2 inches long and 1 1/2 inches wide and is made primarily of black plastic. Like real alarm pads, it has two buttons. When one button is depressed, a miniature bulb lights up, emitting a red glow. This would cause an onlooker to believe that the alarm is genuine. When the other button is depressed, however, a 1-inch blade thrusts forward and locks in place. The blade is small but razor-sharp.

It is unknown how many of these have slipped past law enforcement. Such convenience items have become so popular and

Vehicle alarm pad knife (closed).

Vehicle alarm pad knife (open).

common that they usually escape close inspection, making the weapons they disguise more difficult to detect. If used properly, of course, such items could prove fatal.

WOODEN CROSS ICE PICK

Because of its religious significance, a wooden cross, whether displayed on one's wall or carried on one's person, would rarely get a second look in the past, even from experienced officers. But weapons disguised as wooden crosses have been recovered in almost every region of the United States. They are the preferred edged weapons among streetwise inmates.

Measuring 11 inches long and 7 inches wide, these crosses separate to reveal a 5-inch ice pick-type blade. Designed for deep penetration, these spiked blades will easily cause lethal wounds and will penetrate soft body armor.

This item could easily go undetected and be given back to a

Wooden cross ice pick (closed).

Wooden cross ice pick (open).

suspect, only to be used against an officer later on. The officer encountering such an item must examine it very thoroughly. As the old adage goes, "Better safe than sorry."

SECTION III: MISCELLANEOUS WEAPONS

ASP KEY DEFENDER

This Kubaton-look-alike key chain is really a disguised pepper spray dispenser. Manufactured by the same company that makes ASP tactical batons and widely available for $25 retail, it is an excellent self-defense weapon, especially for women. Unfortunately, it can also be used as an offensive weapon by those who are not law-abiding citizens.

The body of the ASP Key Defender houses a 4-gram aerosol canister of 10-percent oleoresin capsicum (OC)—the same formula used by police. Unlike Mace, OC is an inflammatory agent, causing swelling of mucous membranes, thereby affecting the breathing, as well as inflicting temporary blindness. It also works to ward off attacking animals.

ASP Key Defender.

Measuring 5 3/4 inches long overall, the ASP Key Defender has an aluminum body and O-ring sealed tip. At one end of the unit are an activating button and steel key ring. At the other end is a machined dispersion port. When the button is depressed, a cone-shaped spray pattern of OC is dispersed into the face of the intended target. Six 1/2-second bursts are possible before reloading is necessary. With an effective range of only 5 feet, this weapon requires the user to draw close to an intended target before use. The unit's clever disguise makes this possible. Lightweight and low profile, this innocent-looking disguised weapon produces 2 million Scoville heat units of OC, affecting the eyes, skin, and mucous membranes.

A perfect example of how legitimate self-defense products can be easily turned against the innocent, this item appears harmless but can cause serious injuries.

BIC LIGHTER SPRAYER

Identical in appearance to an ordinary Bic cigarette lighter, this simple product is potentially a very dangerous instrument.

A narrow plastic tube inside the phony lighter's hollow plastic body enables the user to spray a steady stream of flammable, noxious, or caustic fluid with minimal finger pressure. With an effective range of 12 feet, this device can cause severe irritation and burns when aimed at a target's face or eyes.

Available in a wide assortment of colors, these Bic lighter sprayers are sold as prank gifts at novelty shops, toy stores, and even magic shops for about $3. Although not weapons, per se, they can be extremely harmful when used with evil intent and should serve as a reminder to all officers to remain ever vigilant.

Bic lighter sprayer.

Bic lighter sprayer (disassembled).

BLOWGUN FLUTE

Known as *fukiya* in Japanese lore, these harmless-looking musical instruments are actually short blowguns capable of firing razor-sharp needle-like darts. Accurate within 20 feet, they are primarily used as close-range weapons.

Used centuries ago by the mysterious ninja of feudal Japan, blowgun flutes are becoming more and more common today. Although blowgun flutes were traditionally homemade weapons, they are also available commercially through the mail or at martial arts supply stores. They use the same darts used for conventional blowguns, which are also widely available commercially.

Most blowgun flutes are constructed of bamboo, and they

Bamboo flute blowgun with dart.

generally range in size from 6 to 15 inches. Adorned with a variety of ancient oriental symbols or designs and available in a wide assortment of colors, they appear to be nothing more than a child's play toy. However, when used properly from a short distance, they are quite capable of causing injuries to one's face or eyes. Just as the ninja did, today's criminals use this disguised weapon as a means of distraction. Once the intended target is distracted, he can then be disarmed and assaulted further.

These blowgun flutes could easily escape detection. Therefore, close inspection of such musical instruments is strongly advised. That $2 toy could be a deadly weapon.

CONDOM GARROTE

Recovered by a patrol officer in New York City, the condom garrote illustrates the ingenuity of the criminal mind. The suspect involved, who was being held on a minor drug charge, displayed an unusual amount of anxiety when two condoms were removed from his person upon arrest. Suspicious that they may have contained contraband, the arresting officer wisely began to ply one of the condoms between his fingers in an effort to detect any peculiarities. His inquiry revealed a thick, hearty coil of piano wire intended for use as a garrote, a device used to kill by method of strangulation.

Once a garrote is applied around a victim's throat, strangulation can be achieved with little effort. The suspect (who was later dis-

Condom garrote.

covered to be on parole), could have utilized this primitive yet effective deadly weapon at any time during his detention had he been allowed to retain the condoms.

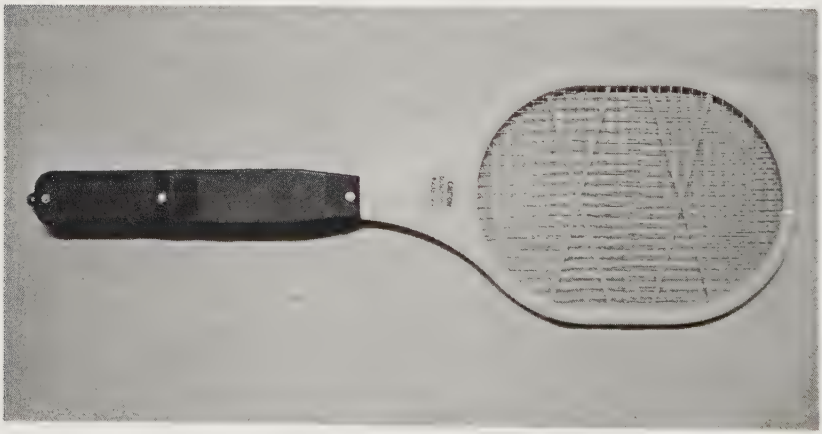
Similar items have undoubtedly been constructed but eluded detection. Clearly, the configurations and designs of disguised weapons are limited only by the imagination, so police officers and law enforcement agents need to be aware of this concept and ever cognizant of such weapons.

FLY SWATTER STUN GUN

A unique and strange design for a disguised weapon, this fly swatter is actually an electronic stun device. Resembling a tennis racquet more than a fly swatter, this novelty item, sold commercially as the Zapper, is described as "user friendly" but will shock and disorient an unsuspecting victim.

The fly swatter stun gun measures 18 1/2 inches long and 6 inches wide and weighs 16 ounces. The plastic handle houses two AA alkaline batteries that serve as the weapon's power source. The racquet wires, measuring 5 1/4 inches across, produce an intimidating shock, similar to conventional stun guns, when touched.

This weapon can be sold legally to almost anyone and, with a



Fly swatter stun gun.

retail cost of only $10 to $15, is becoming increasingly popular. It is commonly encountered in offenders' homes or automobiles, always kept at their side until ready for use.

While it may not be the most exotic or sophisticated disguised weapon available, it is sturdy, affordable, and dangerous.

HAIRBRUSH MACE DISPENSER

The use of Mace or noxious substances account for a large portion of all aggravated assaults (i.e., assaults with weapons) each year. It is no surprise, then, that various disguised weapons contain these substances.

The hairbrush Mace dispenser is of the same size, color, and style as a typical store-bought hairbrush, an item that's as common and innocent as they come. But hidden within the brush's handle is a nonpressurized 4-ounce plastic spray canister that, rather than actually containing Mace or OC pepper spray, can be filled with any noxious fluid. Pumping the small nozzle located behind the brush's soft bristles releases a steady stream of harmful fluid that sprays out to a maximum effective range of 10 to 12 feet.

Available at novelty shops around the country, this weapon is small, lightweight, inexpensive, and legal to possess in many states. Easily concealed in coat pocket or purse, the hairbrush Mace dispenser is harmless in appearance but, if used properly, can produce harmful results.

Hairbrush Mace dispenser.

HOLLOW BEEPER

As already discussed, possessing a beeper is about as common as possessing a pair of shoes, and so meets one of the most important criteria of a disguised weapons. Although not a weapon per se, the hollow beeper warrants special attention because of its ability to house any of a variety of deadly items.

These beepers are commercially manufactured with deception in mind and are openly sold for less than $20. They can also be made at home with little effort and virtually no tools.

Measuring exactly the same size as a standard beeper, the hollow beeper is nothing but a shell. Not only is the battery missing, the guts of the device are removed, leaving a hollow

Hollow beeper containing razor blade.

crevice approximately 4 inches high by 2 inches wide.

Usually used to secretly store and transport drugs, these hollow beeper containers could easily be used to carry such things as blinding powders, noxious substances, razor blades, or handcuff keys, to name a few. Therefore, as a general rule, arresting officers should voucher all personal beepers for safekeeping in order to prevent suspects from escaping or inflicting injuries on themselves or others.

KNOCKOUT CAP

This fully adjustable, one-size-fits-all baseball cap is one of many wearable disguised weapons being produced today. Worn no differently than a conventional baseball hat, this popular accessory, available in assorted colors and designs, is both stylish and dangerous.

The hat's crown is filled with 12 ounces of powdered lead shot, making it a formidable weapon. The user simply grasps the cap by the brim with the strong hand and uses it to strike an opponent with the (loaded) crown. Similar to a blackjack, this cap is capable of delivering vicious blows and can render a victim unconscious.

Retailing for approximately $25, the knockout cap is sold as

Knockout cap.

a "self-defense" weapon at variety shops, flea markets, and over the Internet.

Because of the overwhelming popularity of baseball caps and the sheer number of them being worn, the knockout cap can easily go overlooked. But because perpetrators are known to hide and conceal contraband inside a baseball cap's sweatband, arresting officers should always seize and examine baseball caps as a general rule. The knockout cap's excessive weight should provide an indication to an inspecting officer that something is amiss.

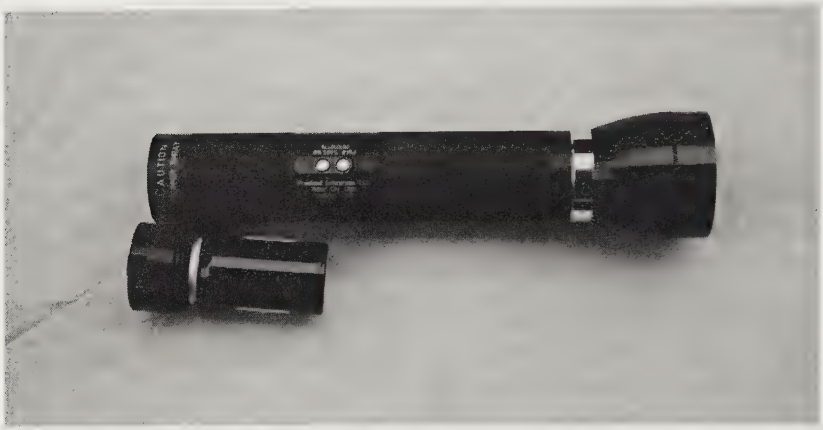
MACE FLASHLIGHT

Patrol officers have carried Mace (or OC spray) as a standard-issue nonlethal force option for many years. This item couples the Mace canister with another commonly used police device—the flashlight. Useful during nighttime car stops and building searches, this working flashlight allows the user officer to always keep his shooting hand free.

The distribution of this weapon is extremely difficult to regulate, however, and so it offers the nonlawabiding citizen an excellent offensive weapon in a disguised form. Mace flashlights can be purchased through the mail as well as at police equipment stores.

Measuring approximately 10 inches long and weighing less

Mace flashlight (fully assembled).



Mace flashlight (disassembled, showing canister).

than 2 pounds, the Mace flashlight is basically harmless looking, emitting a high-density beam of light, as one would expect. However, the base of the flashlight houses a hidden nozzle that is activated upon depressing a hidden tab. The 2-ounce canister of OC secured inside the base of the flashlight is easily replaced.

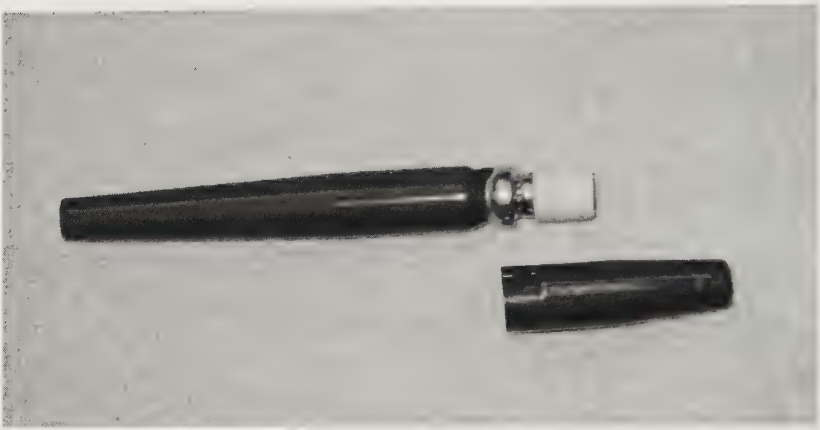
Police officers and other security personnel should be on guard for this item, particularly at night, when a burglar or a car thief posing as a stranded motorist could easily turn it against them.

MACE PEN

Yet another weapon disguised as a pen, this device, sometimes sold under the brand name The Penalizer, contains 0.68 ounces of OC in aerosol form. Measuring only 5 1/2 inches in length, this weapon looks like an ordinary pen and could easily go unnoticed in a pocket.

The potent 17-percent formula of OC used is considerably stronger than the 10-percent formula used in police models, making the Mace pen a formidable weapon. The intense burning sensation and accompanying discomfort this formula would inflict on a victim would likely serve as enough of a distraction to facilitate an escape or continued assault.

Mace pen (closed).



Mace pen (open).

Commonly sold for "self-defense," the Mace pen retails for $10 and is available in navy blue and maroon.

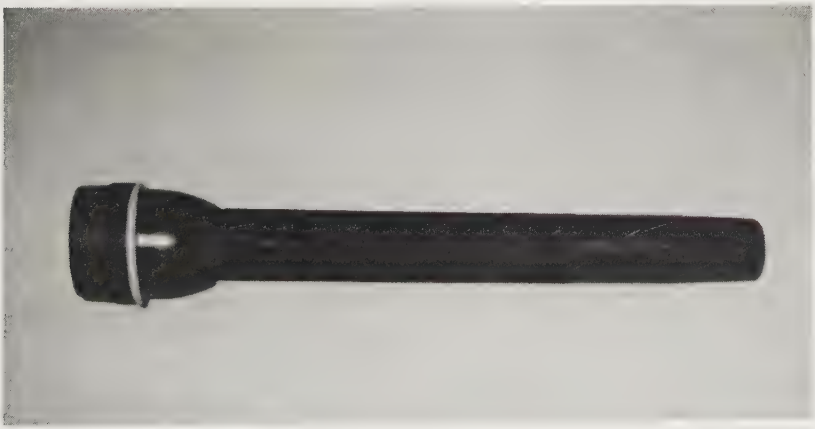
Because manufacturers continue to produce weapons emulating the pen's design, officers are reminded to inspect any items that resemble writing implements and remain cognizant they may contain dangerous weapons.

MINI-FLASHLIGHT BATON

Fashioned after the miniature flashlights commonly encountered today, this disguised weapon is both covert and deadly.

Although it's a nonfunctioning flashlight, it is constructed of case hardened steel and looks like the real thing, measuring only 8 inches long when closed. But with the mere flick of a wrist, it transforms into an 18-inch telescopic baton. Once the baton is extended, the spring cosh is locked in place, and the weapon can be utilized to deliver bone crushing blows to an unsuspecting victim.

Weighing in at a very respectable 2 pounds, this inexpensive but rugged blunt instrument is capable of producing massive



Mini-flashlight baton (closed).

Mini-flashlight baton (extended).

trauma to the head and face and will break bones very easily. Ideal for carry on a belt, in a pocket, or in a glove compartment, the mini-flashlight baton could escape notice very easily.

PEN STUN GUN

This pint-sized weapon proves that the pen is truly mightier than the sword.

The pen stun gun is black and measures 5 inches long and only 1 inch wide. Although it does not resemble a conventional pen in exact detail, it could easily be mistaken for a thick magic marker or highlighter pen.

Sold commercially as the Muscle Man 100,000, this disguised weapon is actually a 100,0000-volt stun gun capable of incapacitating even the most able-bodied police officer. The outer case of the pen stun gun is constructed of unbreakable plastic, making it surprisingly durable, and it is equipped with a convenient pocket clip,

Pen stun gun.

which offers easy access and high concealability.

To operate the device, which is powered by two AAA alkaline batteries, the safety switch must be positioned to ON. The trigger is then held down to release continuous voltage. Three seconds of contact will cause loss of balance and muscle control, muscle spasms, disorientation, and mental confusion, quickly immobilizing an unsuspecting victim. Although stun guns will work on any part of the body, the manufacturers recommend targeting the upper shoulder, upper hip, and below the rib cage for maximum effects.

Because stun guns are nonlethal and legal in many states, pen stun guns are easily obtained. They are also inexpensive, retailing for under $25.

A real danger for law enforcement, these disguised weapons can be easily turned against an escorting officer and effectively used against him if not discovered.

PEPPER-SPRAY CELL PHONE

Almost identical in size and weight to a normal cellular phone, this realistic-looking item actually houses a 20-gram canister of 10-percent OC pepper-spray solution. Constructed primarily of black plastic, this phony phone is lightweight and can be carried openly without arousing any suspicion. Relatively inexpensive, the pepper-spray cell phone is sold through the mail and over the Internet with little or no restrictions.

The OC canister is inserted through an opening at the back of the phone so that it sits properly with its nozzle pointing outward. Holding the fake phone in the strong hand, the user places his or her thumb on a spray button located in an opening on the side and

Pepper-spray cell phone.

depresses it, releasing a stream of OC out to an effective range of 8 to 10 feet. With a 10 to 12 half-second-burst capacity, this nonlethal device makes a formidable weapon.

Because OC attacks the human body's involuntary responses, it is extremely effective against even the most pain-resistant individuals. The formula used in the pepper-spray cell phone is certainly potent enough to successfully irritate an officer long enough to disarm him. It poses a significant threat to all members of law enforcement, but especially court officers and airport security personnel.

PEPPER-SPRAY PAGER

The "pepper-spray pager," as it is commonly called, is exactly like an ordinary store-bought beeper in every detail except one: this beeper contains two canisters of OC agent in the same 10-percent formula used by police, for maximum results.

This product is marketed under the brand name Pepper Spray Pager, but there are numerous variations on the basic design. It can be found on the Internet and through various mail-order outlets, as well as in boutiques, novelty shops, and flea markets in large cities. Selling for $9.95 to $19.99 as a "self-defense" item, this potential offensive weapon is aimed and fired with a tab located on top of the beeper. Refilling is simple; the

Pepper-spray pager.

beeper pulls apart and the canisters of OC are replaced.

The offender armed with this weapon could quickly spray OC into an officer's face with little effort, distracting him long enough to facilitate escape. Therefore, officers should remove and closely inspect all telephone pagers.

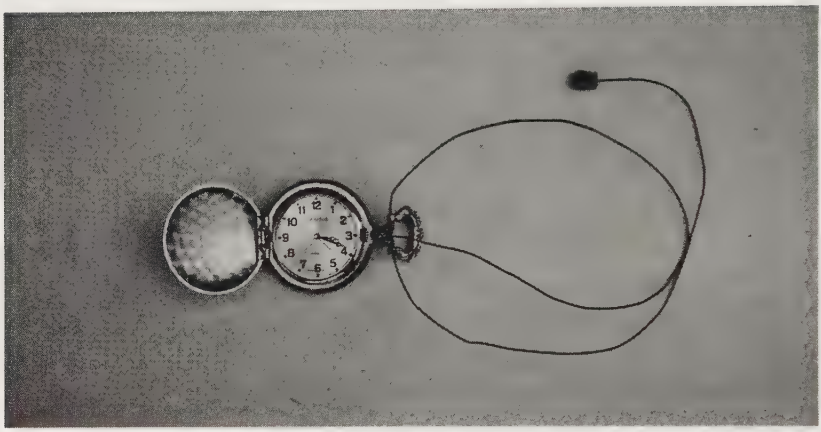
POCKET WATCH GARROTE

What appears to be a classic pocket watch is actually a unique deadly weapon: the pocket watch garrote.

When examined, this item is indistinguishable from a real pocket watch. It is the same size and weight as a conventional model but does not function like one. The knurled knob located on the side of the watch appears to set the time and wind the clock. However, when turned, this knob dislodges and pulls free from the body of the watch, revealing a coil of fine wire that extends to 16 inches. Surprisingly strong and durable, this wire can easily be used as a garrote to strangle an unsuspecting victim.

Discovered during a routine cell inspection at a metropolitan

Pocket watch garrote (closed).



Pocket watch garrote (extended).

police station in the North following a narcotics sweep, this dangerous instrument was actually left behind by an anonymous owner. The officers stationed at this police precinct were very fortunate that the owner elected to discard it and did not attempt to use it. This item appeared to be professionally made, and recent recoveries of other models around the country seem to support the theory that a small company is offering it commercially.

Small, lightweight, and versatile, this new disguised weapon will kill. Look out for it!

SAP GLOVES

Sap gloves are powerful impact weapons that transform empty hands into powerful bludgeons.

Sold commercially under various brand names such as Fists of Fury, they are similar in appearance to normal leather gloves and come in all standard sizes. Each glove is made of tough, fine-quality rawhide or deer skin leather and has 6 to 8 ounces of powdered lead carefully sewn into its outer shell, effectively equipping the wearer with a pair of brass knuckles. Evenly distributed between each knuckle and the back of the hand, the pattern of lead shot is barely noticeable. Even a single blow can render an adult male unconscious, while multiple blows will easily result in massive head trauma.

Eight-ounce sap gloves.

Favored by motorcycle riders and routinely worn during the colder, winter months, sap gloves were originally manufactured for police officers themselves. Today these potentially deadly weapons are widely available for less than $50 through the mail, at motorcycle shops, and at police equipment stores that also sell to the general public. They may be carried in jacket pockets or briefcases or stowed away inside handbags.

As standard procedure, an officer must first establish that a suspect's hands are free of any items. As an added precaution, if gloves are being worn, the officer must ascertain whether they are capable of causing harm and inspect them carefully once removed. These protective measures will only take seconds but may prevent injuries.

SODA CAN MACE

Unlike the hollow product cans sold as safes and ideally used to secret weapons and other contraband (see Part IV), this unit contains a built-in weapon in the form of a Mace dispenser. Except for a small nozzle used for dispensing the Mace, this can of soda is indistinguishable from the real thing. Available in various popular brands at relatively low cost, this beverage container is the exact size and weight as an average 12-ounce can of soda. Although not as popular today as in years past, this disguised weapon can still be purchased with ease over the Internet and through mail-order catalogs.

The Mace canister is simply loaded at the bottom of the can,

Soda can Mace dispenser.

out of view and ready for use. Pushing a button located on the top of the can activates the weapon, spraying a steady stream of powerful liquid up to 15 feet. This is an offensive weapon that is capable of blinding and choking an intended victim. Unlikely to arouse any suspicion, the soda can Mace dispenser could easily be mistaken for a real beverage and returned to a suspect or prisoner.

STUN-BRELLA

This stun baton is cleverly disguised as a collapsible umbrella with a wrist strap and contoured rubber handle and sold under the brand name Stun-Brella. Stun-Brella stun batons retail for $50 to $75 and, in addition to being sold on the Internet, are also available through mail-order catalogs and at flea markets.

Legal in many states across the country, stun batons are ideal distracting devices and are among the most popular items for sale on self-defense Web sites. What makes the Stun-Brella even more of a threat is its element of surprise.

Measuring 12 inches long and 1 3/4 inches in diameter, the Stun-Brella delivers a shock when touched anywhere along its 5

Stun-Brella stun baton (closed).

Stun-Brella stun baton (open).

1/2-inch to 9-inch tip. Powered by two 9-volt batteries, the Stun-Brella is capable of producing 300,000 volts of electric current and can temporarily paralyze a body's neuromuscular system with a simple touch. Although considered nonlethal, these items will deliver shocks through clothing and, in rare cases, can cause a victim's heart to stop.

Similar in appearance to an ordinary store-bought tote umbrella, this umbrella stun baton is a major cause for concern, as it could easily be carried into a secure area, either in one's hand or tucked into a jacket pocket, handbag, or briefcase, and later used against an officer or civilian.

STUN GUN FLASHLIGHT

A newcomer to the wide array of handy personal flashlights disguised as various types of weapons is the stun gun flashlight. Toted as a nonlethal self-defense weapon, this inexpensive device is legal in most areas and is sold openly with few or no restrictions. A stun gun delivers a shock to an attacker, causing loss of balance and muscle control, confusion, and disorientation. Because the voltage is high but the amperage is low, there is no permanent damage. Recoveries usually only take five or ten minutes.

The stun gun flashlight is available in two popular sizes. The small model, which retails for around $40, measures 8 inches long and requires one 9-volt battery to operate. Constructed of fiber-

Smaller, 80,000-volt stun gun flashlight.

glass reinforced plastic, this innocent looking adjustable-beam flashlight doubles as an 80,000-volt stun baton. The larger version measures 16 1/2 inches long and requires three 9-volt batteries to operate. Also constructed of fiberglass and plastic, this heavy-duty light, which is fully adjustable and even comes with an attachable red cone for signaling, doubles as a 200,000-volt stun baton. It retails for approximately $75.

Either of these devices will cause temporary paralysis and could easily be used to attack and disarm an unsuspecting officer.

TEAR GAS WATCH

This is a device straight out of a spy novel. What looks like an ordinary wristwatch is actually a weapon containing CS gas.

The watch appears to be real at first glance, although close examination reveals that the face of the watch has no numerals on it. Even this is not strikingly suspicious, of course, as it could still be mistaken for a digital watch.

A button located alongside the watch face acts as the trigger. When the trigger is pressed, the prescribed amount of CS is dispersed, giving the intended victim a face full of tear gas. Perfect as a distracting device, this weapon could be used either offensively or defensively, although it is sold as a self-defense weapon. "It's so

Tear gas wristwatch.

lightweight, even you'll forget you're wearing it . . . until you need it," boasts the manufacturer. Available in black and green, the Mace watch retails for around $15.

Although nonlethal by themselves, these watches make perfect disguised weapons. A prisoner could very likely be allowed to keep this timepiece and have the opportunity to use it, if not on the initial scene of arrest, then at any time while in custody. Such a weapon would prove advantageous to a desperate prisoner and disastrous to a corrections officer or police officer. Beware!

WAR FAN

Yet another example of a centuries-old disguised weapon still in use today, the iron war fan (*tessen* in Japanese lore) was originally intended for use by peasants, women, and the elderly. Identical in appearance to an ordinary folding fan, it is surprisingly effective when used as a blunt striking implement in the same fashion as a small club or bludgeon. It remains a martial arts favorite that is popular among both sexes. Sold at martial arts supply stores, neighborhood dojos, and mail-order catalogs, war fans are widely available with few or no restrictions. Although retail prices vary depending on size, design, and materials used, the average retail cost is approximately $40.

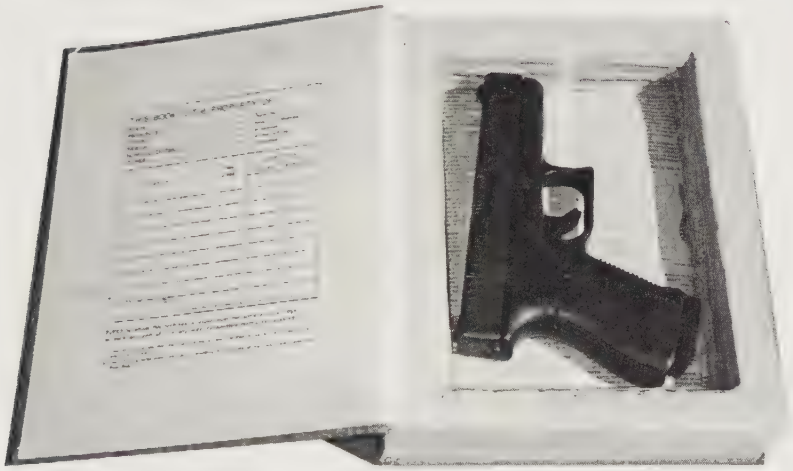
These fans come in a wide array of colors and designs and are fashioned from a variety of materials, with silk, vinyl, and plastic being the most common. Constructed exactly like their ordinary counterparts, they are fully functional, opening and closing with ease. However, each individual piece, or rib, of the war fan is constructed of metal, iron, or steel, thus making the entire unit a hefty and very effective bludgeon when closed and grasped with the strong hand. War fans can cause severe injuries when used to deliver blows to an unsuspecting victim's face and body. Some models even have sharpened edges, doubling their effectiveness.

Although sizes vary, two are predominant. The larger measures 14 inches long from tip to tip (when closed) and 26 inches wide when fully extended, or opened. A smaller, more concealable version measures 8 inches long from tip to tip (when closed) and 16 inches wide when fully opened.

Iron war fan.

Decorative and elegant in design, these war fans can easily be overlooked during searches, mistaken for harmless tokens. Only the alert officer who takes possession of this harmless looking but deadly disguised weapon for inspection will notice the extraordinary weight of the unit, which should ultimately give it away.

SECTION IV: SEARCHING TECHNIQUES



SEARCHING TECHNIQUES

Once you have made contact with a suspect, it is extremely important to practice good tactics, whether you know that he/she is armed or not. Poor tactical performance can be detrimental to your health—and that of your partner and others. Remember, the suspect knows what he is armed with. You do not! Certain techniques will ensure a safe and efficient search.

As a precautionary measure, always assume that the suspect is armed (regardless of gender and offense committed) and proceed with caution. If possible, always attempt to keep a safe distance from the suspect, voicing your commands from behind cover. Granted, this is not always possible. Therefore, if a quick approach is necessary, do it from an avenue that puts you at an advantage, affording you ample cover for as much of your approach as possible. (This can usually be achieved to some extent even when you're on the run. Your options may be limited to approaching from an angle or placing parked vehicles between you and the suspect, but these are better than nothing.) Additionally, you should crouch down to make yourself a smaller target.

Whether from behind cover or on the run, always pay close attention to a suspect's hands, making sure they are empty—not just free of any obvious weapon (such as a gun or knife), but free of any objects, period. As seen time and time again throughout this book, any object can be used as a weapon and has the potential to harm you. Therefore, order the suspect to free his or her hands of any and all objects, including beepers, keys, packs of cigarettes, and so on. Next, make the suspect show you his or her empty

hands, watching for any sudden movements involving the suspect's hands or other body parts. Is the suspect reaching for a weapon?

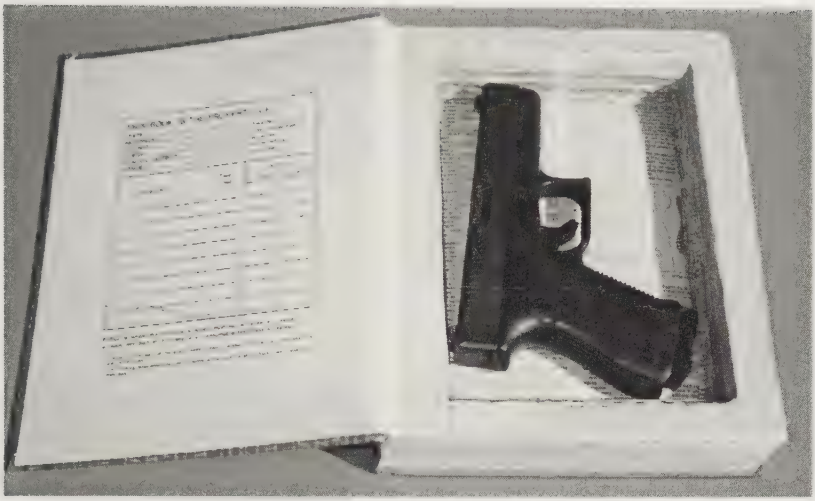
While conducting a visual inspection, keep an eye out for anything that does not fit. Look for any aberrations, and question items that are not normally carried. Do they fit that suspect's character? Are they items normally carried at that time of day or in that season of the year? Oftentimes, recoveries are made not because officers noticed a weapon but because they noticed something was just not right and decided to investigate further.

While making your observations and attempting to draw closer to the suspect, your weapon can be drawn, but only if it's feasible. If you're with a partner, one of you should make the approach while the other covers from a position off to the side. This will avoid a cross-fire situation.

Before you start your search, it is important to place the suspect in the most uncomfortable position possible. (He knows what he is armed with and where it is located. If he is too comfortable, you offer him the ability to run away once you draw near to his stash or, worse, afford him the opportunity to turn on you unexpectedly and attack you.) This can be achieved by placing the suspect up against a wall and then positioning his feet as far back as possible until he is almost bending over. Next, place your weak leg between the suspect's legs. Your body should be bladed to one side with the strong leg to the rear. This will keep your gun side away from the suspect and out of his reach. In addition, with one leg between the suspect's two feet, you can quickly execute a leg sweep if he attempts to push off the wall and run. Another method is to position the suspect across the hood or trunk of a vehicle.

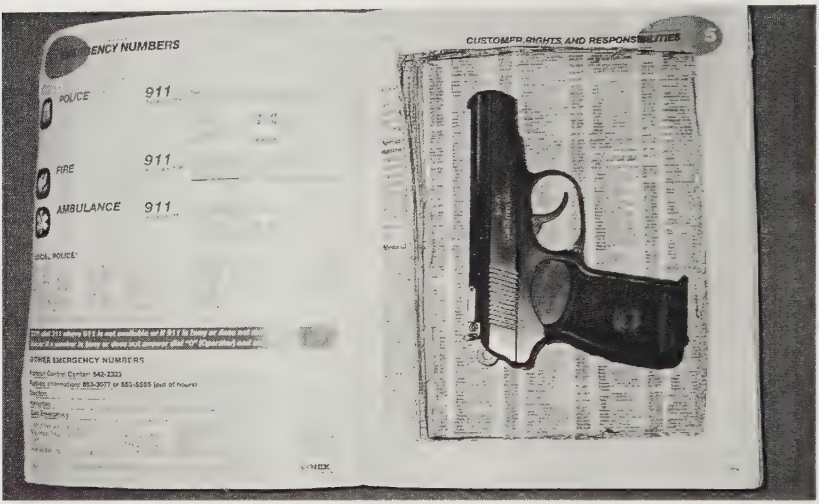
Begin your search where you feel the most comfortable. Make sure only one person conducts the search, however. This will avoid confusion and will provide better protection, as one officer will always be covering the suspect. If alone, you may want to consider waiting for a backup officer before proceeding.

Searches should be systematic, safe, and comfortable. Wearing gloves is usually helpful. However, when choosing a pair of gloves



for this purpose, special attention should be given to the thickness and shape of the gloves. Gloves that are too thick provide too much padding and may result in your missing an item on a pat-down. Also, thicker gloves make it harder to fire a service weapon. A thin pair of gloves, on the other hand, provides some protection against knives, needles, and razor blades, as well as harmful drugs that may be absorbed through the skin, while not getting in the way.

Some officers like to check the waistband before any part of the body because guns are often secreted there. A search of the waistband will also reveal any knives worn in a sheath on the belt. Remember, though, you are searching for concealed weapons, and they can be hidden anywhere and in anything. Examine every piece of personal property on the suspect. Look at bracelets and necklaces. Examine oversized charms to see if they contain hidden blades. Check all lipstick and chapstick containers for knives. Check all cigarette packs, cell phones, and lighters. And don't forget pens. As noted, pens can contain blades, shoot bullets, or spray mace. So be careful. Even Walkman personal stereos and pagers can contain harmful devices. Although not weapons themselves,



they may be hollow inside, serving as holsters for small firearms or other weapons.

Be thorough. If a suspect squirms or pulls away, search again until you are satisfied. Double-check the groin area and do not omit the collars, armpits, legs, and feet. The "plastic" knives mentioned in Section II and similar items are surprisingly slim and can be taped to a forearm or calf. Since they will pass through a metal detector, the only means of detecting them will be a thorough search. Also include any items that a suspect may have been carrying prior to being stopped. Books are routinely hollowed out to conceal firearms. Cans of soda, shaving cream, or furniture cleaner may also be hollow. These are sold commercially as "safes" to hide valuables in the home. Needless to say, they can also be employed to secret weapons or other contraband.

If you find one weapon, do not stop searching; there may be more. Simply secure it on your person and continue the search. Many suspects carry several weapons on their person. Also look out for hidden handcuff keys. Sometimes taped onto the inside of a belt, they can also be hidden inside beepers, watches, or even sticks of chewing gum.

If your vehicle does not contain a cage or shield, it is a good idea to have one officer ride in the backseat with the suspect during transportation. In any event, after removing your suspect from the vehicle, always check the backseat for any discarded weapons you may have missed during the initial search, and always search the suspect again before lodging him or her in the cell area. If the suspect is female, have a female officer strip search her before lodging.

Close examination of seemingly harmless items may appear unorthodox, but it may just save your life. When you make discoveries, share them with others. Awareness can mean the difference between life and death, apprehension and escape.

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Craig S. Meissner is a police sergeant with the New York City Police Department (NYPD) and holds a bachelor's degree in criminal justice. He has served as a patrol officer, robbery investigator, patrol sergeant, and field training sergeant. His assignments have also included the detective bureau and a correctional facility. A 12-year veteran, Sergeant Meissner has received more than 50 individual medals for bravery and numerous other awards.

Sergeant Meissner is married with four children. A free-lance writer on officer survival, he has published articles in numerous police publications. This is his first book.

Concealed weapons are nothing new. Many, such as war fans ar gun flutes, have been around for centuries, and police recover ever more devious devices on the street almost daily. But after Se 11, 2001, heightened vigilance regarding hidden weapons became a ority for law enforcement and security personnel worldwide. The e 9/11, and other security breaches that followed, awakened the publi grave dangers covert weapons—and lackadaisical security mea pose to civilians and police alike.

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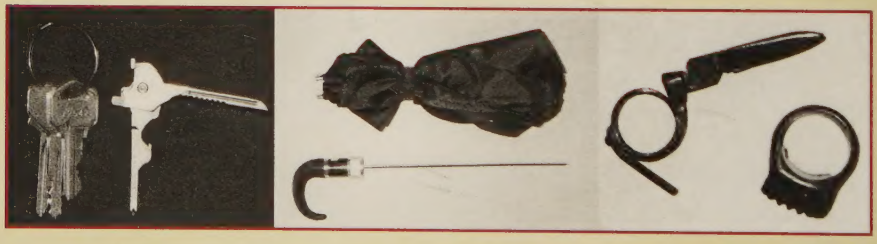
This book, written by New York Police Officer Craig Meissner, dri point home. From guns disguised as beepers and cell phones to razor-sharp plastic knives shaped like credit cards to stun guns taking the form of pens and flashlights, the weapons described in this book are based on everyday objects that would not ordinarily arouse suspicion. Outwardly innocuous and strikingly simple, all of these items are extremely treacherous, and most are potentially lethal. In addition to insight into the kinds of weapons to be on the alert for, Meissner offers indispensable advice on search tactics and techniques that will ensure their safe and efficient recovery.

Whether you're a police officer, border patrol or airport security agent, corrections officer, private security guard, member of the armed forces, or defense-minded civilian, this book provides an eye-opening—and potentially life-saving—glimpse into the world of covert weapons and the ingenuity of the criminal mind.



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